

TO THE  
THE  
Spiritual Director,  
OF  
Devout and Religious  
SOULS.

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*Written by* ST. FRANCIS  
SALES, *Bishop and Prince*  
*of Geneva.*

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# TO THE READER.

**N**One who ever read the devout books writ by that blessed St. Bishop Sales, will think that the least strictures which dropt from his mellifluous pen, should be confined to France, and lost to those pious souls in England, who are not skilled in that language. This consideration induced me to turn translator (an employ, from which I always had an aversion,) and to render this piece into English. I had moreover a desire to do some service to that holy man in the best manner I was able, by increasing to him those accidental joys in heaven, which every happy soul receives, whenever their good works done here, do become more diffusive, and extensive to more subjects; either by instructing them in the knowledge of heavenly things, or by affecting them to pursue

sue them; in producing which good dispositions in the minds of his readers and hearers, this seraphic saint was very signally excellent. It needs little reflection to see that his heart was a burning furnace of divine love; since every pious reader may even feel, by the warmth it gives them, that each expression darted thence, is a lively spark to enflame others. Though his thoughts, while at home in his own breast, were most sublime, yet his charity was so condescending, that, the better to communicate them to others, he delivered them in such a easy and familiar manner, that he adapted them to every ordinary capacity.

But that which was most peculiar to the genius of this great master of spirituality, was an air of an unaffected and genuine sweetness, which gave a most delicious relish to all his persuasive discourses, made them attractive to all, and, like oyl, the emblem of charity, did penetrate, and with a gentle softness insinuate into hearts of the most obdurate



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rate temper. It is this which made his kindest invitations to embrace truth, and follow virtue, so irresistible, that they had the full force of importunate compulsion, though they had nothing of its roughness; nor did they leave any power in the most ill-natured will, to oppose such calm and clear reason, accompanied with such an obliging charity, and charming civility. In a word, though the whole composition of his writings were wholly made up of that heavenly fire, that rained down at Pentecost, yet, by a strange art almost particular to himself, he so refracted that warm zeal, which other great saints have made use of to press men to exact virtue, that his charity, though ardent in itself, seemed only to have the nature of a lambent flame, enlightning and purifying, without offending or scorching.

This charitable and indifferent complaisance, (if I may so call it,) was so remarkable in this holy man, that the Church judged it proper to make mention of it, in the particular

lar prayer appointed in his office, and to declare that he was (to use the words of the apostle of the Gentiles,) omnibus omnia factus, or, became all to all, to gain them to Heaven; suiting, by a prudence more than natural, and accommodating his discourses so aptly to the exigence and dispositions of every single person, that he sweetly captivated both their understandings and wills, and subjected them to the law of Christ.

This did also give occasion to the saying of that learned controvertist, the famous Cardinal Perron; if (said he) you would have a calvinist convinced, bring him to me; but if you would have him converted, [of whom it is said in his life, he converted seventy two thousand,] send him to Bishop Sales. His great knowledge, though it were extraordinary and above the common, could only give such previous lights, as were able fully to satisfy an unprejudiced understanding; but, to gain upon, and subdue such a noble faculty, as that of the will, which

which is only subject to God's omnipotence, is the proper work of such heroic Saints, as breath nothing but a most enflamed and refined charity; such select persons being the fittest instruments for the divine Spirit of Love, to make use of as means, when he infuses his best gift, sanctifying grace. All that anteceded, let human learning do its utmost, were no more than dry proposals; nor could they arrive at the pitch of effectual motives, till that unseen hand, by the inspiration of his holy Angels, and of such angelical men, did touch the heart.

I hope none will [I am sure none can, without professing at the same time he dislikes perfection,] look upon this peice as less recommendable, or less useful; because the author of it, did chiefly (at least particularly) intend it for religious votaries, of his own Order. I would ask such men, for what end do the generality of Christians, read the lives of so many holy hermits, martyrs, bishops, and religious? Certainly not to imitate them, in what belongs

longs to their particular vocation, but in what concerns all Christians in general; that is in the purity of their intention, the aiming all their actions at Heaven, and the doing them in conformity to God's holy will; from which duties no state, how high or low soever it be, ought to be exempt, since in this good disposition consists all our merit. Besides, though the stations in which providence has placed us be different, and several instructions are found here, which do more especially regard a recollected life; yet it is not hard to transfer those advantageous rules of exact virtue to our own circumstance, and thence inure ourselves, to parallel degrees of perfection. At least, if we fall short, it will keep us humble; while reflecting on one side, upon the purity of those angelical souls, and on the other, on our own slight performances, we shall remain confounded and ashamed at our sloth and tepidity. For what can give well-meaning Christians a greater regret, than to consider that,

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that, though we are framed of the same mould, have the same Heaven proposed to us for our reward, and so many holy examples set before us for our imitation, we are still so backward to follow them in the paths of perfection; the roughness of which [if any thing can be rough that is sweetened with love] so many pure souls, by constantly treading in them, have (as the holy baptist expresses it,) made plain, and beaten into a direct, smooth and even road?

Thine affectionately  
in Christ.

J. S.







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CHAP. I.

*Of Liberty of Spirit.*

**L**IBERTY of spirit is the keeping the heart totally disengaged from every created thing, that it may follow the known will of God.

The soul which has attained to this liberty, takes no care for any thing, but that the name of God be sanctified

sanctified, that his majesty reign in us, and that his will be done.

The first mark of this holy liberty of spirit is, not to be attached to, or set upon any consolation whatever; but having done our duty, to remain indifferent to every thing else.

The second mark is, that the heart, which has attained this liberty, do not in such a manner engage its affection to any spiritual excercises, as that, if through sickness, or by obedience, it be hindered from performing them, it gives way to any trouble or regret; and that though it ought still exceedingly to love them, yet it be not for all that, attached to them.

The third mark is, that we do not upon any account lose our joy and content of mind; for the loss of nothing can make him sad, who is not fondly addicted to any thing.

The effects of this liberty are a great sweetness of spirit, a genteel complaisance and condescendence to whatever is not sin, and an humour

mour easily moved to all actions of virtue and charity. For example, a soul that is attached, or earnestly addicted to the exercise of meditation, if she be interrupted in it, will fall into vexation, disturbance and anxiety; whereas a soul endowed with this liberty of spirit, retains still the same equal countenance, and a heart full of kindness, even to that which incommodes and hinders her from meditating. For, it is all one to her, whether she serves God in using mental prayer, or whether she serves him, in assisting her neighbour; both the one and the other being agreeable to the will of God; but the relieving her neighbour is more agreeable; because it was more necessary at that season.

In the exercises of this liberty are comprehended all the occasions, and all things whatever, which happen contrary to our inclination; for he who has his inclinations free, and not particularly bent upon them, does not fall into any impatience

patience by being detained from them.

This liberty, (like all the other virtues) has two contrary vices, instability and constraint, that is, a loose carelessness, and a slavish pro-pension.

Instability or looseness is a certain excess of liberty, which makes us upon the least occasion that presents itself forego and break our rules and laudable customs of living; whence the heart becomes dissipat-ed and disorderly scattered, and thence comes to lose itself.

Constraint or slavishness, is a certain defect of liberty, by which the spirit is overwhelmed and beaten down with vexation, or anger, that it cannot go on with its design; though at the same time it might do what is much better.

To arm ourselves against the shock of this temptation, two rules ought to be observed, viz. that one must never leave off their exercises, and the common ways of virtue, unless he sees that the will of God obliges

obliges him to the contrary. Now such a will of God, manifests itself to us three manner of ways; by necessity of the thing, by obedience, and by charity.

The second rule is, that when charity moves us to use this liberty of spirit, we are to take care that it be done without scandal, or injustice. For example, in case I know that I shall do more good in performing some other duty, than in doing that to which I apply myself at present, I am not, for all that, at liberty to change the former, for fear I should give scandal, and withhold wrong justice; because I am, in my circumstance, obliged not to quit that station in which obedience has placed me.

Two or three examples will make this clearer. St. Charles Borromeus was the most exact, rigorous, and austere in his manner of living, as can well be imagined: he drank nothing but water, and eat nothing but bread, and in four and twenty years, he went but twice into his garden. And yet  
this

this rigorous man did often dine with the Swiflers to gain them to goodness; nor made he any difficulty to drink heartily with them every meal, above what was necessary to quench his thirst. So much did his liberty of spirit borrow leave of his rigour, when a greater good was to be done.

The bishop Spiridion eat flesh in lent with a pilgrim half dead with hunger, to take away his scruple; there being nothing else for him to eat: so full of charity was the pious liberty of this holy man.

Father Ignatious Loyola eat flesh on Wednesday in holy week, upon the meer order of a physician, who judged it expedient for a small indisposition that had seized him; and yet a spirit of constraint, made him pray three days continually.

These like lesser stars, give us some small light, but now I will present you a sun; I mean a spirit perfectly free from all manner of engagement, and solely bent to perform God's will at any rate.

I have



I have oft been thinking, what was the greatest mortification of any saint whose life I ever read; and this seems to me the most unparalleled. St. John Baptist was in the wilderness five and twenty years; good God! how was his heart inflamed with the love of his Saviour even from his mother's womb! How ardently did he desire to enjoy his holy presence! Yet nevertheless, being wholly addicted to perform God's will, he continued there to do the duty which God had enjoined him, without coming so much as once to visit him, and staid till Christ thought fit to come to him. After this, and after he was baptized, he never follows him, but remains behind to do his office. What a prodigious mortification of spirit was this! To be so near his God and Saviour, and not so much as to allow himself the happiness of going to see him! To have him so near him, and not to enjoy him! and what signifies this; but that his heart was so disinterested, and

and so disengaged from every thing and even from God himself here, that he would forego all the spiri-  
al comfort he might take, and all the spiritual profit he might reap by Christ's company and presence, merely that he might do his will, and attend his service. This example of liberty of spirit is so transcendent, that I cannot think of it without amazement and astonishment.

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## C H A P. II.

*What it is to live according to the Spirit.*

**T**O live according to the spirit, my well beloved daughter, is to have our thoughts, words and actions, directed according to those virtues which are in our spiritual part, and not according to our sense, or those sentiments which are agreeable to our flesh. And what virtues are these? Faith, which acquaints

us with such truths which are wholly elevated above our sense: hope which raises our hearts to the expectation of invisible goods; and charity, which makes us love God above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves; and this not with a sensual, natural and interested love, but with such a love, as is pure and solid, as having its root and foundation in God. You see here that human sense, which is built and grounded on the flesh, is the cause, why we do not sufficiently abandon and give up ourselves into God's hands, but come to distrust him.

The soul which relies on faith, and is only grounded on it, does encourage itself amidst the greatest difficulties; because it is well assured that God loves, supports and succours those who are in misery, so they do but put their trust in him. Human sense will needs have some share in every thing; and loves itself so fondly, that it esteems nothing good, or well done, if itself have not a hand in it. On the contrary

trary, the spirit fixes itself only on God, and often-times says within itself; and makes account that whatever is not God, is nothing to her, or worth regarding; and as she does concern herself through charity, in such affairs as are communicated to her, or put upon her; so through self-denial and humility, she voluntarily quits her part, as to such things as are not proposed to her, nor affects to have any thing to do with them.

To live according to the spirit, is to love what the spirit loves: to live according to the flesh, is to love what the flesh loves; for love is the life of the soul, as the soul is the life of the body. A person is very sweet-natured, and very agreeable; and I tender him dearly; he loves me too very heartily, and obliges me highly, and for this regard I render him a reciprocal love: now, who sees not, that in doing thus, I love him according to the sense, and the flesh? Another is rude, harsh and uncivil; and nevertheless,

less, not for any pleasure or content I take in him, nor for any kind of self-interest, but purely, because such is the good pleasure of God, I cherish, serve, and caress him. This love is according to the spirit; the flesh having no share at all in this kind of love.

I am distrustful of my self, and thence I am very desirous to foment this despondency, and to live according to my propension. Now who sees not that this giving way to my natural inclination is not to live according to the spirit? No certainly. But, if, though my nature be fearful and apprehensive, I do notwithstanding, strive to overcome my natural passions, and by little and little frame my self to perform laudably, those things that belong to my charge with obedience, which the divine disposition has imposed upon me, who sees not that, in this case, while I do this, I live according to the spirit?

To live according to the spirit, is to do those actions, speak those words, and think those thoughts  
which

which the spirit of God requires from us. When I say, think those thoughts, I mean by these words, voluntary thought. For example, I am in a sad or musty humour, and for this reason I refuse to speak at all: and carmen, nay the very parrots do the same. But if I be sad, but yet, because charity commands, I bring myself to speak as I do at other times; this is to behave myself like a spiritual man. Again, I am contemned or disregarded and fall into anger; peacocks and apes do the same. But, if when I am slighted, I rejoice at it, I shall demean myself like those masters of spirituality, the apostles. Wherefore to live according to the spirit, is to do that which faith, hope, and charity teach us to do, whether it be in temporal things, or in spiritual.

## C H A P. III.

*Of Devotion, and the Love of God.*

**T**O have true devotion, we must keep God's commandments, and the precepts of the church, which are ordained for all christians: but, besides these general laws of living, we must moreover carefully observe and practise those particular ones too, which belong to every ones vocation: and he who neglects these, though instead of doing them, he should raise the dead, he would be in the state of sin, and damned if he dies so.

For example, bishops are commanded to visit their flocks, to instruct, reform, and comfort them. Wherefore, though I remained a whole year together in prayer, though I fasted all my whole life, and yet neglected to do these duties, I should questionless utterly ruin my soul.

Though



Though one who had entered into a religious order should do miracles, and yet renders not due obedience to superiors, he is for all his miracles, worse than an infidel; and the same may be said of other such like cases.

We see here then two sorts of commandments, which we must carefully observe if we would have our devotion solid and well grounded: and our devotion consists in observing them readily and voluntarily: to gain which promptitude and readiness, we must make use of two considerations.

The first is, that it is God's will; and though there were no other motive, the highest and clearest reason tells us that we ought to comply with his will; this being the sole reason why we are placed in this world; and with what face can we pretend we are his, if we refuse to frame our will to his?

The second consideration is, that we lay to heart that the nature of his commandments are sweet and pleasant

into pleasant, nor do I speak the general ones only, but also of those particular ones which belong to every mans vocation. What is it then that makes them seem irksome and grievous? Nothing, certainly but our own proper will which will needs reign in us, let it cost what it will: It pretends indeed in words, that it desires to serve God; but yet on our own fashion, or as it pleases ourselves, and not as it pleases him: which is in effect, to desire that our will may be done, and not his.

God will accept no sacrifice which contradicts obedience. How preposterous is it, that when God commands me to look to the care of souls I should spend my time in contemplation. The contemplative life is indeed good and holy; but not when it comes in competition with obedience, and prejudices it. It does not belong to us to chuse our own will: we ought to have done but what is his, and if it be God's will that I apply myself to one thing I ought to have no will

to apply myself to another: It was God's will that Saul should serve him in the quality of a king and a captain, and he would needs take upon him to serve him in the office of a priest, and offer him sacrifice: no doubt but this last was in itself more excellent than the former; yet God was not at all pleased with this consideration: his will was that he should be absolutely obeyed. It is the wretched frailty of our nature to prefer the doing our own will before God's; whence is seen, that the less we are addicted to gratifying our own will, we shall in proportion, so much more easily perform the will of God.

We ought to consider that there is no state of life which has not its troubles, disgusts, and vexations; insomuch, that excepting those who are wholly resigned to God's will, there is scarce any man who would not willingly change his condition for that of some others.

They

They who have a fever find no place easy to them; they can scarce continue a quarter of an hour in one bed, but they long to be in another: it is not the bed which makes him thus uneasy and restless, but it is the fever that torments them wherever they are. He that is not sick of this fever of self-will, finds his content in any condition, so he performs the will of God: he is not solicitous in what quality God employs him; provided the divine will be done, he is indifferent in what way it is done. Yet this is not all, there is yet another thing requisite to make us truly devout, which is, that we must do God's will in the station in which he has placed us, with alacrity, and chearfully. If I were not in such a condition already, perhaps knowing what I do now, I would not have embraced it; but the divine providence having put me in it, I become obliged to go through with it, let it be as tedious as it will; nor only so, but I am moreover obliged to comply with it joyfully, and by

my resignation to make it pleasant to me, though I did not find it such. And this is the meaning of that saying of St. Paul. Let every one remain in his vocation before God. He must renounce his own choice and wish; and, if it be painful to him, bear his cross. It is a temptation to stand thinking, I could be well contented with this or that, or I would be more willing to be in that state than in this. Our Lord knows what he does; all we have to do is to do what he would have us, and continue in the posture in which he has put us. To enable you the better to perform this, you may make use of these considerations. First, in the morning reflect on the perfect obedience which Christ, our Lord and Pattern did exercise to the commands of his heavenly Father; and, by his example, strive and enforce yourself to gain a vigorous love of accomplishing God's will. And, secondly, when you find yourself in such circumstances as give you pain and vexation, consider how the saints

saints have gone thorough, and this cheerfully, and joyfully, many things which were far more troublesome and vexatious, than those you endure. Lay this to heart and encourage yourself, by their example.

Thirdly, You must often consider, that all we do, has its true value from the conformity, we have with the will of God, insomuch, that, if when I eat or drink, I do it because it is God's will I should do it, I shall please God better than if I suffered death, without having that intention.

Fourthly, You are often to ask our Saviour, mentally, Lord what is your will I should do? Is it your pleasure that I should serve you in the vilest office in the house? Alas! I am too happy you are pleased to accept and employ me at all for your servant, let it be in what it will; let me but serve you, and I shall not be solicitous how mean a drudgery you appoint me; it will be dignified enough by its being a service to the King of heaven.

Then

Then descending to that particular work which is so disgustful to your nature, ask again: Is it your will I should do such or such a thing? I will do it, Lord, most willingly. Good God! What store of humility will you gain, what inestimable treasure, of grace and virtue, will you acquire by this holy exercise.

Moreover, we must endeavour to render our devotion amiable, profitable, and agreeable to every one we converse with. The sick will love your devotion for the charitable assistance and comfort, they find by it. Your fancy will love it, because it renders your humour more sweet in all occurrences, and more kind and affable in your reprehensions, and so of the rest; all sorts will be pleased and gratified by it. Your superiours, by seeing it makes you more pliable, ready, and cordial in obeying and performing their commands. Your equals by finding that it makes you more debonaire, more assistant to help their necessities,



ties, and more condescending to all their desires that clash not with the will of God: In a word, you are to labour as much as is possible to render your devotion more acceptable, agreeable, and charming to all sorts whatsoever.

And for this reason, my dear daughter, be careful not to omit your coming to the holy Communion, let the occasion that would divert you be never so great. Nothing will better recollect your spirit, which is apt to be squandered, than the august presence of your king; nothing will warm it so well as the approaching to your sun; nothing will soften it so gently as that celestial balm.

Continue to comply with this supreme bounty of his with sincerity and sweetness of spirit, since he invites you to partake it with so much sweetness and love.

Keep your affections in an orderly subjection to the will of your great God and dear Saviour; take heed you do not cherish so much as one of them, under what pretext soever,

soever, which is not made authentic and legitimate by the seal of your heavenly King. Nay, if it be possible, do not love God's will because it is agreeable to yours ; but love your own will purely because it is agreeable to God's.

Be careful to render your heart every day more purer. Now this purity consists in prizing every thing according to its just value, and weighing it by the weights of the sanctuary, that is by the agreeableness it has to the divine will

Let me intreat you not to set your affections too much upon any thing, no not upon the virtues themselves, which we oft times lose by our zealous over-doing them. Oh, what a happiness would it be to keep all our affections exactly, and humble subject to the will of God ! it is the glory of this holy love to destroy, and annihilate in our soul whatever is not God himself, that so we may reduce and convert every thing into him, who is the original of all things. He is exalted,

exalted best in our annihilation, and reigns most perfectly when he is seated upon the throne of our intire subjection. All that is done for this love is love: Let it be vexations, troubles, or even death, it is all of it nothing else but love, when the love of God is the motive for whose sake we endure it. Endeavour to frame yourself, to become a little lamb, or dove; that is all full of simplicity, sweetness, and meekness, without reply when you are crossed, or without requiting evil for evil. Love this early and ever-loving God, my dear sister. Love him in your retirements, when you sequester yourself from company to pray to him and adore him; love him affectionately when you receive him in the holy communion, and when he vouchsafes you consolation in your devotions: but above all, when trouble and inward afflictions happen. Love him in your driness, in your tribulations and contradictions; for thus he loved you of old in Paradise; and

has still better confirmed and attested to you this love amidst his scourges, nails, thorns, and the dismal darkness on mount Calvary. Take notice of this and lay it up in your mind, as a most authentic truth, that they who pretend to have any part in Jesus glorified, must first (at least in their desire) have some part and suffer with Jesus crucified.

It is a great good to be God's; and the greatest good our soul can arrive at, is to be purely God's or only his. He who is wholly God's is never sorrowful for any thing but that he has offended God, and his sorrow for his offence, is accompanied with a sweet and profound, but yet a quiet and peaceable humility and submission; after which he raises himself again by a sweet and perfect confidence in the divine goodness, without any chagrin or vexation. He who is entirely God's, seeks after nothing but him; and in regard he knows that he is equally his in tribulation, as in prosperity, therefore

fore he remains in perfect peace though surrounded with adversities. He who is only God's thinks often of him amidst all the rencounters and occasions of this life. Lastly, he who is only God's, is well content that all the world, should know that he is resolved to serve him, and to use all the exercises and means which are proper to keep himself united with him. Be then God's, my good daughter, and only his; desire nothing but to please him; be no creatures, nor love it, but in him, and for him, as far as his divine will gives you leave.

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#### C H A P. IV.

##### *Of the Qualities requisite to true Devotion.*

**B**E not shy to make it your profession, that your particular intention is to nourish your soul, by an intimate (or hearty) strong and generous devotion. I say intimate and hearty, or springing from  
your

your interiour; not doing any thing through meer custom, but out of the choice and application of your will: And if sometimes, at unawares, the exterior action prevents the interior affection, because it is customary to do such things, let the affection follow after it as close as is possible. Strive to do your outward actions well, and endeavour to make them arise from your interior acts; as the fire breeds cinders, and the cinders do again kindle and nourish the fire.

Moreover this devotion of yours ought to be strong. First, that it may bear the shock of temptations, which will most certainly assault those who serve God, with a true heart. Secondly, it must be strong, that they may support the variety of humours which is necessarily found in the company we converse with; and this is a very great trial for those weak souls, to have to do with whom our circumstances oblige us to converse. Thirdly, it must be strong to support

port itself against our own imperfections, without disquieting or discouraging us; as also to attempt the perfect correction and amendment of them. It must be strong to keep under our struggling passions still ready to break loose: strong to resist the talk and rash judgments of the world that they do not trouble our interior peace. Strong to keep us independent of our affections, friendships, and particular inclinations, so that we do not square our life according to them, but according to the light and the rules which true piety dictates. Strong to keep our souls unmoved, and in an even poize amidst the tender-nesses, sweetnesses, and consolations which come to us both from God and from creatures: that we do not suffer ourselves to be too much affected with them, or addicted to them to the prejudice of our liberty of spirit. Lastly, strong to encourage and enable us to make a successful war against our bad inclinations, ill habits, and natural propensions.

Thirdly,



Thirdly, Our devotion must be generous and brave, that we be not stunned when difficulties assault us, but rather that we rouse up our courage to overcome them. For that man cannot be said to be truly valiant whose courage is daunted, and not rather encreased and excited to a brisker alacrity by contrasts and opposition.

Let us say with the spouse, draw me, and I will run after thee for the attractive odour of thy perfumes. The divine lover of our souls leaves us oft times entangled and sticking fast in the sordid pitch and birdlime of our own miseries, to the end that we may know more assuredly that our deliverance comes from him; as also that we may hold this precious favour in higher value and estimation. Let us not fear then to cry we will run after you; for, though of ourselves we are not able even to stand, much less to run, yet through the assistance of his grace, we may to that degree run, that he will accept our endeavours.

But

But take heed of despising or undervaluing others. Let Martha follow in God's name her practical affairs, but let her not controul Magdalen; let Magdalen pursue her divine contemplation, but let her not take upon her to contemn Martha; for our Lord will undertake the cause of the person that is censured. Use yourself to bear a heart supple and maniable, obedient and easy to condescend to any thing that is lawful; and kindly charitable, apt to receive all the rays which the sun darts upon it. Blessed are the pliable hearts, for they will never break.

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## C H A P. V.

### *Of the Effects of the love of God.*

**I**N all your actions, aim at God's glory and at his holy love. For from hence proceeds the despising of the world, the despising ourselves, the hatred of the world, the hatred of ourselves, our forgetfulness

getfulness of the world, our forgetfulness of ourselves; the banishing of all vice out of our hearts, and the treasuring up of all virtues there in their stead; the cutting off all imperfection, the opening of our hearts to receive all perfection; modesty in our behaviour, sweetness in our speech, affability in our conversation, respectfulness in our countenance, simplicity in our heart, meekness when we are injured, humbleness when we are praised, indifference to all things proposed to us, if there be not more of God's honour on one side than on the other, resignation in adversities, patience in our labours, peace in the midst of our troubles, assurance in dangers, joy in our sicknesses, fervour in our prayers, continuance in our meditations, and contentment in our crosses.

Oh! how happy a thing it is not to live but in God, not to labour but in God, not to rejoice but in God. Henceforward, I do resolve through God's heavenly grace  
I will

I will no more be any thing to any body, nor shall any body be any thing to me, unless in him and for him only. I will endeavour from henceforth, to look upon all the souls of my neighbours, as placed in the holy breast of my Saviour; to soften and melt my soul, by this means, into sweetness and dear charity towards them. For alas! He that regards his neighbour as in any other place, will run a hazard neither to love him purely, nor constantly, nor equally; but there I say, in that blessed place, who would not love him, who would not suffer him and bear with all his imperfections, and this without trouble or regret? For this neighbour of mine is truly there, he is in the bosom and the breast of my divine Saviour; he is there as most beloved by him: Nay so amiable in his eye that he suffers death for him. Oh admirable lover! whose love is manifested in his death, and his death in his love.

CHAP.

## C H A P. VI.

*Of the Love of our Neighbour.*

**M**Y dear daughter, do not we love our dear Jesus? If then we love him, we are to feed his sheep and his lambs; which, as himself has taught us, is the true mark of a faithful love. And with what are we to feed these dear little lambkins of his? certainly with nothing else but with love itself; for either they do not (spiritually) live at all, or they live by their love. But how are they to love? the glorious St. Bernard has told us that the measure by which we are to love God is to love him beyond measure; and that there ought to be no stint in this love of ours, but we must let it extend its branches as far as is possible. The love of God keeps the first rank, and the love of our neighbour follows in the next. You must love your sisters with the whole strength of your heart. We must  
not

not content ourselves to love them  
 as ourselves, as the command of God  
 obliges us; but, if we would ob-  
 serve the rules of evangelical per-  
 fection, we ought to love them more  
 than ourselves. Love one another,  
 says our Saviour, as I have loved  
 you. These words deserve our  
 deepest consideration, the true  
 meaning of it, being that we must  
 love them more than ourselves;  
 for it is thus our Saviour loved us,  
 ever preferring our interest before  
 his own, and still continuing to  
 do the same every time he gives us  
 himself, and makes himself our food  
 when we receive the most blessed  
 sacrament. He requires then of us  
 that in our love we prefer our  
 neighbour before ourselves; and  
 as he did all he could for us, ex-  
 cepting only that which might pre-  
 judice his own salvation (for this,  
 in regard he could not sin, was im-  
 possible) so he wills, and the  
 rule of perfection requires, that, to  
 our utmost, we should do all we  
 can for one another, except that  
 only which hinders salvation.  
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Moreover this dear charity ought to be solid and strong, and sufficiently able to make us do and suffer any thing whatever for our neighbour, and especially for those of our particular community, that does not endanger the health of our soul.

Now this most cordial friendship has two virtues which always bear her company. One of them is called affability, the other good conversation. Affability besprinkles with a certain sweetness those serious affairs, and communications which we have with one another; and good conversation renders us gracious and agreeable in our recreations, and less serious affairs, which the course of our life obliges us to have with our neighbours.

CHAP.



## C H A P. VII.

*Of the Imitation of Christ our Lord.*

IT is a great truth, and as such ought to be well reflected on, that nothing can settle our souls in a more profound tranquillity in this world, than frequently to consider our Lord in his afflictions. We shall behold there so much contempt, such calumnies, so much poverty, indigence and abjection, such pains, torments, nakedness, injuries, and all sorts of most bitter vexations, that, in comparison to those, we cannot complain of some part of them, when they happen to us, without a most unreasonable injustice. My dear daughter, a heart that loves Jesus Christ cordially, loves his death, his pains, his torments, his being spit upon, his revilings, his hungers, his thirsts, his ignominies, and whenever some or any of these falls to his lot, he amorously embraces it, and comes off from it with ease.

You

You ought every day, besides your customary prayers, take a review of our blessed Saviour, suffering the pains with which he wrought our redemption; and to consider what a happiness it had been for you to bear some part in them. Behold now that time is come, and that happy occasion is offered you; namely, when you endure contradictions in all your desires and designs, even those which seem to you most just; and yet out of a fervent love of the cross of Christ, and his dolorous passion, you heartily welcome them, and cry out with blessed St. Andrew, Oh good cross, so much beloved by my Saviour, when wilt thou receive me into thy arms, that I may imitate thy master?

The pure love of our dear lord is never practised so entirely, and perfectly as it is in the midst of torments. To love God amidst sweet delights, is so far from a manly virtue, that even little infants, who guide themselves only by their sense, would do the same.

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But to love him amidst the worm-wood and gall of afflictions and pains, is the proper test of a faithful love. To cry live Jesus while you see him gloriously transfigured on mount Thabor; even St. Peter, though at that time uncultivated in true christianity, and scarce in his senses, could easily afford; but to use the same affectionate language when he is suffering on mount Calvary, this pitch of unshaken and perfect love; this, I say, none but his blessed mother, and that faithful loving disciple, to whom he then gave her for her Son, did ever arrive at.

The heart which is perfectly united with God, cannot refrain from loving him, and to receive sweetly those amorous rays which he darts upon it: the words which God speaks to an afflicted heart which has recourse to his goodness, are far sweeter than honey, and more deliciously effectual to cure all the ulcers of the soul, than the most precious balm.

CHAP.

## C H A P. VIII.

*How to exercise ourselves in the Imitation of our blessed Saviour.*

**Y**OU may draw excellent motives of holy love from all the actions which our most amiable and charming Jesus practised during his whole life. When any occasion is offered of exercising any virtue, cast back a short glance upon the manner how our blessed Lord did exercise the same when he lived here among us; and thence stir up your courage, animated with love, to imitate his holy example, and with alacrity cry out; well, let us on then, let us follow our glorious leader, let us imitate our perfect and holy pattern Christ Jesus: For when you are to pray, relieve the poor, give counsel to any, remain solitary and retired, enter into conversation with others, or suffer some trouble or contradiction: call to mind in what manner

ner our Lord did on divers occasions perform the same duties, and immediately stir up your spirit and say, let me on, and follow my Saviour; though there were no other reason to do this and more, but only that my dear Master showed me by his example the way how to do it: this alone is sufficient to convince me that it is my duty. Nor let any think this exercise is tedious, or long, it may be performed at one single glance of our mind, or one affectionate sigh, saying within ourself, dear Lord I am yours.

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## C H A P. IX.

### *Of the Nature of a Religious State.*

**A** Monastery or Convent is an hospital for persons who are spiritually sick or wounded; and come there to be cured; and to this end they expose themselves to suffer bleeding, launcing, cutting, sear-ing, and the bitterest sorts of medi-  
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cines, and ways of curing: wherefore, my dear daughter, make full account that this is the state you have undertaken, and give no ear to what self-love shall tell you to the contrary; but sweetly and amorously embrace this holy state, and settle in your mind this blessed resolution, that you must either be cured there, or die there; and thence say to yourself, since I will not die spiritually, I do heartily submit myself to my cure, and all the methods to compass it, though never so harsh; and I will beg of my physicians not to spare me, but let me endure all the means that are proper to gain my soul's health.

Have a great care you do not take hence occasion to disquiet yourself, that you cannot so suddenly quiet the various motions of your peccant humours. Do you well consider what a Convent is? It is an academy, or house of exact correction, where every soul must learn to suffer herself to be handled, smoothed, and polished; that being at length well framed and  
planed,

planned, she may the better be fitted, joined, and fixed more exactly to the will of God: it is an evident sign of perfection to be willing and desirous to be corrected; for it is the principle fruit of humility which makes us acknowledge we stand in need to be rectified

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## C H A P. X.

### *Of Mortification.*

**D**AUGHTER, self-love never dies but with our body: We must always sensibly feel its open attacks, or perceive its secret ambushes, as long as we live in this place of exile. It is enough that we never yield to it with such a consent as is voluntary, deliberate, and fixed. These troublesome inclinations of ours are precious occasions given us by God, that we may exercise our faithfulness towards him, by taking care to repress and subdue them. As soon as ever you perceive you have swerved from that duty, repair your fault by



some contrary action of sweetness, humility, and charity towards those persons to whom you found some repugnance to submit yourself; for knowing on what side your enemies must assault you, it behoves you to set yourself stiffly to oppose them, and to fortify yourself where you are attacked: You must still be ready to make head against them, and counterbuff your ill habits and inclinations; you must recommend your endeavours to the assistance of divine grace, and on every occasion to calm and sweeten your spirit, laying all thoughts aside but those which seem most proper to secure you the victory.

To this end we must crucify in ourselves all our affections; particularly those which are most lively and stirring, by a perpetual moderation, and by weakening those actions which proceed thence: we must, I say, bridle them in strictly that they do not start from us with that impetuosity with which our impatient nature would hurry them; nor must they at that dis-

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quiet season proceed from our own will, but from the will, of the Holy Ghost, the spirit of peace. Above all; let us keep our heart in a sweet and charitable temper towards our neighbour, especially when the disgust is most prevalent; for then we may be assured that it is not for his own sake, but our Saviour's that we love him; which renders our love most excellent, and highly valuable, as being in that case more pure and unsullied by any temporary motives.

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## CH A P. XI.

### *Against Proper Judgment.*

**Y**OU ask me my dear daughter, if to be addicted to ones own opinion be a thing contrary to perfection? to which I answer, that to be subject, or addicted to have opinions of our own, or not to have them, is neither morally good, nor bad, being merely natural. Every one has some opinion or other of his own;

own; but this does not hinder us from arriving at perfection, so that we be not wedded to them, and are fond of them; for it is only the love of our own sentiments, which keeps us imperfect; nay, which is infinitely contrary to perfection; and this is that which I have often told you that the love of our proper judgment, and the value we set upon it, is the cause why there are so few perfect souls. You will ask what must be done then to mortify this inclination? You must retrench the diet which nourishes it. It comes into your mind that such a one does such a thing untowardly, and that it would be much better were it done as you apprehend. Wave that thought, and apply yourself to some other thing, saying within yourself: Alas! Why do I concern myself about a matter that does me no harm? It is always far better to pass by such things by a simple neglect, than to stand searching for reasons to correct ourselves, or find that we are in the wrong; for instead of doing this,  
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our understanding, which is pre-occupied with its own particular judgment, will make us take the thing by the wrong handle; so that instead of retracting our opinion, it will present to us many reasons (perhaps false ones too) to maintain it, and to vouch it to be good: wherefore it is the more wholesome advice to disregard it, and to send it packing as soon as we perceive it, before we know what it will say for itself.

When either out of charity, or obedience we are required to give our advice concerning any question proposed to us: it is best to give it plainly and simply; but for the rest, or whether it be followed or no, to remain indifferent. We may also give sometimes our judgment of the opinions brought by others, and allege the reasons on which we ground our own sentiment; but we must do this modestly and humbly, without despising the sentiments of others, or contesting to make our own opinion take place, and be preferred. Perhaps

haps you will ask whether it nourishes the imperfection lately spoken of, if we see occasion to talk afterwards with those who were of our sentiment, after the resolution is taken already, what is to be done, and the question is determined? I answer there is no doubt, but this nourishes the inclination to our proper judgment, and consequently is not free from some imperfection: for this is a certain sign that such a one is not disposed to submit to the judgment of others, but bent, at least inclined, to follow his own. Wherefore, the matter under debate being determined, we ought no more to think of it, than we ought to talk of it, unless it happen to be a thing notably bad; for, in that case, some expedient may be still found to wave the execution, and put a remedy to the harm that otherwise would have ensued by it: but this must be done with as much charity as may be, and insensibly too, without shocking any one's credit, or giving less commendation to whatever was good

good in that sentiment, than what was justly due.

The only true cure for proper judgment, is to wave that which is suggested to our thoughts, and apply them to some better object; for if we give reins to our ranging thoughts, and let our attention ramble over all the opinions that come into our mind in every occasion, and rencounter; what can follow hence, but continual distractions, and impediments to more profitable things, and more properly conducing to our perfection, which will render us incapable and indisposed to perform our prayers as we ought? For having given up the liberty of our spirit to amuse ourselves in such trifling bagatells, it will be apt still to plunge forwards, and will produce thoughts upon thoughts, opinions upon opinions, and reasons upon reasons, which cannot fail of turmoiling us with many importunate distractions in our prayers; our prayer being indeed nothing else but a total application of our soul, and all her faculties to God:

whence, while she squanders her thoughts upon unprofitable trifles, she becomes less able to consider attentively thole holy mysteries which are the subject of her prayer. It is true, indeed, that it lies not in our power to hinder the first motion of complaisance which present itself when our opinion is approved and followed; this, I say, is altogether inevitable; but we must not amuse or detain ourselves in this thought: let us, when we come to reflect, bless God the author of all wise counsel for it; and this done, let us go on with our other exercises, without being in pain that we had complaisance, no more than we should if we had found some little sentiment of trouble or regret, if our opinion were not well liked and followed.

You see here what I had to say to you concerning the subject of the first question; by which I instructed you, that barely to have opinions was not contrary to perfection, but to have a selfish love and esteem  
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of them; for if we did not esteem them, we should not be so fond of them; and if we were not fond of them, we should not much care though they were rejected, nor be so apt to hold our own still, and say, let others think as they will, but as for my part,—Do you know what this imperfect saying [as for my part] means? Why it plainly means this, I will not submit myself, but will still persist firm in my resolution, and in my own opinion. This proper, or rather, selfish judgment, as I have often said, is the last thing we are willing to part with; and yet it is one of the things that are most necessary to be parted with, and renounced, if we intend to arrive at true perfection. Without this we can never gain true humility, which forbids us to value and esteem ourselves, or any thing that has dependence on ourselves. If then we have not a high esteem of the practice of his virtue; we shall still be in hazard of thinking ourselves something better than we are, and that others do owe us  
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some surplusage of esteem above what they owe others; which suits but badly with humility. But enough of this subject.

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## C H A P. XII.

### *Of Difficulties.*

**A**S for the difficulties which occur in God's service, do not disquiet yourself, nor put your spirit out of humour, no, by no means. Be assured it is nothing but your ghostly enemy the devil, who hovers above your soul, prying and searching if he can spy any door open, and unguarded when he may enter. It is no more than he did to St. Anthony, St. Catherine, and innumerable other good souls. And must we vex ourselves, because he is thus wickedly importunate and troublesome? God forbid; our Lord will make him raise his siege, when he sees his time. Oh my child of little faith! what is it you fear? Be not at all frightened. You are

are tost indeed, upon the sea, by the wind and waves; but it is Jesus Christ who stretches out his hand to you, as he did to St. Peter. Lay fast hold of it; go on joyfully; do not stand speculating or discanting upon the ill plight you are in. Fear nothing I say; God will not suffer you to be lost, so you do not let go your hold, but live according to your good resolutions. Let the world be turned topsy-turvy, let nothing but darkness, smoak, and confused hurley-burley surround you on all sides; God is still with you; and though this your God dwells in darkness and on mount Sinai, all covered with smoak, thunder, lightening and dreadful noise, his merciful help is never the farther from us; not at all certainly.

Be not fondly tender over your self; tender mothers spoil their children. Do not give way to weeping or bewailing yourself, nor be stunned with the trouble, and violence which sensibly affect you. God permits them to perfect

fect you in humility by letting you see clearly how abject, vile, and helpless you are of yourself. This temptation is to be combated only by throwing yourself entirely upon God, by withdrawing yourself from all creatures, who are (without him) as helpless as yourself; by applying yourself to your good Creator, who is all your strength; and with continual affections for the holy virtue of humility, and simplicity of heart.

Be still equally complaisant to all those with whom you converse, and do not estrange yourself from their company; nor suffer your spirit to be stunned with the difficulties that occur. How can you expect to gain any thing that is precious without some trouble, and pains-taking? Above all, labour all you can to keep up the superior part of your soul; not by entertaining yourself with sensible feelings and consolations; but by holding firm to your resolutions, good purposes, and to those effects, and exercises with which faith, your religious

ligious rule, the command of your superiors, and your own reason shall inspire you.

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## C H A P. XIII.

### *Of Sickness.*

**I**T is your duty to bear the cross of our Lord in your sicknesses with devotion and love; keep your will free, both in asking for, and taking, those remedies which are prescribed you. Be patient, mild, and courageous in suffering your pains. He that can preserve this sweetness and gentleness amidst his pains and languishings, and keep his interior peace among the multiplicity and bustling noise of business, is upon the brink of perfection.

Trouble not yourself to make long prayers when you are sick but endeavour to make your very infirmities become a prayer, by offering them to him who loved your infirmities so much, that in the day  
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of his nuptials, and the greatest rejoicing of his heart, he made choice of those for the most glorious jewels in his crown. —

Holy love has taught us this lesson that we ought in imitation of our Saviour to endure his cross with humility; as being unworthy of that honour to suffer any thing for his sake, who has suffered so much for ours; and with patience even to death, since he would not come down from his cross till after his death, as was the pleasure of his eternal father. And, in what other manner can we better witness the sincere fidelity which we owe our Lord, than amidst our pains and tribulations; besides, this mortal life of ours is such, that we are obliged to eat a pound of wormwood for an ounce of honey. This is only our sauce, that is, our meat.

You will perhaps ask how you can serve God in the middle of your sicknesses? And I answer, you may serve him in that season the best of all, by offering him all the pains

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pains you suffer. Oh! how great a glory is it to suffer well and as we ought! When our Lord was on the cross he was declared king by his enemies themselves; and consequently those good souls that suffer their cross, humbly, and patiently because such is his will, are by doing this declared queens. Would you know what is the only thing for which the angels do envy us? it is this; that we can suffer for our Lord, and they cannot: let your infirmities be as great as Job's, yet you may remember how it was said to him, that in all these occasions Job sinned not; and why? but because he put his firm hope in God. Take, courage then, my dear children! behold your spouse, your king, how he is crowned with thorns, and all torn upon the cross; which done, consider that it is not fit the crown of the bride should be more sweet and delicious, than was that of her bridegroom; according to that saying of his, my well-beloved is amongst virgins as a rose amongst thorns. Such a situation



situation is the natural place of this flower; and no better than that is the place of our heavenly spouse. Accept then heartily a thousand times a day this cross, and kiss it affectionately for his love who sends it, that you may be like himself; and so, a fitting bride for him. Oh! how eternally happy will you be if you suffer for God's sake, or, in conformity to his holy will, this short and small affliction he sends you! Represent to yourself your Saviour crucified just before your eyes, and then weigh with yourself which of you does more suffer one for the other; and I believe, you will find yourself vastly behind hand with him upon that account.

The bed of sickness is the school of humility. It teaches us how fleeting, weak, and miserable we are. It is there that we discover the imperfections of our souls: while we are in other places, which are pleasant, they hide themselves, and remain with us; but there they break out and show themselves.

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It is one of the greatest profits affliction brings with it, that it makes us see our own nothingness, and the defects of our own bad inclinations. I say not this that it should give you trouble, (for it is no news it should be so in corrupt nature) but, that you should still endeavour more and more to cleanse and purify your spirit, and have recourse to God, whose grace only can work that good effect.

Vex not yourself that while you continue sick you cannot meditate; for to endure patiently God's hand when it afflicts us, is at least a good equivalent to mental Prayer. It is better to bear the cross of our Lord, than only to think on it. Endure then patiently all the inconveniences which attend your sickness without murmuring, or giving way to your passions; which at that season are apt to shew themselves upon every little occasion. My advice is, that you exercise yourself strongly at that time in an ardent love, and desire that God's holy will be

be done in you in the abnegation or refusal of exterior contentments. And in sweetness of spirit amidst the bitter pangs of your body ; this being the most excellent sacrifice you can ever hope to offer up to the Almighty.

Practise not only a faithful love, but also a tender, sweet, and kind affection to all those that are about you. For I tell you out of the experience I have had, that though sickness does not bereave us of our charity, yet it will to some degree sour our nature, and alter that sweet humoured kindness, which we ought to bear our neighbour, if we stand not well upon our guard. In a word, let your infirmities be what they will, whether of body or mind, you ought to suffer them sweetly and calmly ; humbling yourself indeed before God, but without fretting, or giving way to the least discouragement.

CHAP.

## C H A P. XIV.

*Of Calumnies.*

**A**S for calumnies, the best method we can take to repair the ruins of our credit they have made, is to despise the tongues which were the instruments of them, and to answer them with a holy modesty and compassion. The honour of virtuous souls is under the protection of God; and though to humble them and exercise their patience he suffers them to be shaken, yet he never permits them to be trampled under foot, but, generally, he suddenly relieves them.

And with good reason ought you not be over solicitous what the world says of you. He who has wholly and without reserve given himself up to God, ought to judge it an impertinent thing to be so highly concerned for his reputation. As for me, says holy David, I am an abject, and despised, yet, I have not  
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for all that forgotten thy justifications. Let God do as he pleases with our life, our reputation, and our honour, since they are all his; if our disesteem serves to bring more glory to him, ought we not to think it glorious for us to be esteemed and abject? I glory, says St. Paul, in my infirmities, that the virtue of Jesus Christ may dwell in me. What virtue of Jesus Christ? What but his humility, his resignation, his abjection, or humiliation of himself.

Daughter take heed that in your carriage to those good sisters that disesteem and speak slightly of you, you do not make any show, misbecoming an unchangeable humility, sweetness, and a friendly, and hearty candour; nor set yourself to stand up in your own defence. There happen sometimes human temptations among the servants of God. If we have true charity in our hearts, we ought peaceably to bear with them. Let all the world say what it will, this is still most assuredly true, that he who loves most

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most shall be most beloved; and that he who is most beloved, shall be most glorified. Love God then cordially and sincerely; and for the love of him, all creatures; and particularly those who despise you; and trouble yourself no farther, but only to keep yourself humble, and our Lord will most certainly give you a crown of glory.

Nor let calumnies give you any trouble; but be assured that while your soul is virtuous, and truly resigned into the hands of our Lord, all sorts of such attacks will vanish like smোক before the wind; and the greater the wind is, the sooner they will disperse, scatter and disappear.

The mischief of calumny, and the wounds it inflicts are never so well cured, as by letting them pass without taking any notice of them; by despising that, which would despise us; and by witnessing, by our undaunted, and unmoved firmness that we are above its reach. St. Gregory comforted an afflicted bishop with

with these words. Alas if our hearts were in heaven, the winds of contradiction would not shake it at all. Oh! how true it is, that he who renounces the world; is above the world, and that nothing that passes here below, can hurt or touch him.

Cast yourself at the feet of our Saviour crucified, and see how many injuries he received. Beg of him by that sweetness with which he received them, that he would give you strength to endure those little pittance of them which fall to your share as being his servant.

## C H A P. XV.

*How we must bear ourselves when contradictions happen to us.*

**W**HEN afflictions, or contradictions, happen to you from any one, take heed you do not give way to complaints; but on the contrary, strive with all your might to preserve your heart with tranquillity. But if it should so light, that some sally of impatience starts from you,



you, as soon as ever you perceive it reduce your heart to sweetness, and peace. Our good Lord loves those souls that are tost in the waves and tempests of temptations, so they do but resignedly welcome the troublesome vexation as coming from his hands; and like valiant soldiers, strive to preserve their fidelity untainted, amidst all their combats and assaults.

## C H A P. XVI.

### *Of Patience.*

**Y**OU must by little and little tame the vivacity of your nature, and reclaim it to patience, sweetness, humility and affability, and not weary the ears of your superior with complaints about childish trifles, which happen among the weaker sex, not worth the heeding of any sober or wise christian.

Your serious business is to live up to God's will; and for the love  
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he bears you, to suffer quietly all your afflictions. This you must do, if you would be a true servant of God, which consists not in being always carested with his consolations, always in sweetness, always without feeling any aversion, or repugnance to what is good; for, at this rate, the greatest saints could never have been God's servants. To be a true servant of God, is to be charitable towards your neighbour; to lay up in the superior part of your soul, an unshaken and inviolable resolution, to follow the will of God: to have a profound humility and simplicity, divesting yourself of all self-reliance, and putting your whole trust in God; and to recover and rise up again as often as you shall happen to fall: to be firm to yourself, and continue to be the same person, and in the same humour, when you are slighted and undervalued; and to bear gently and calmly the imperfections of others.

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## C H A P. XVII.

*Of Temptations.*

**A**S for temptations, never trouble yourself to give them any answer; nor to seem to heed our enemy. Though he makes a great noise within you, it is not a straw's matter; keep your quiet and suffer it with patience. Prostrate yourself before God, and remain still at his feet. He understands very well, that your meaning is to beg his assistance, though you are not able to form your petition into words. Do not give way to fall a reasoning or arguing with the devil, and he will be weary of bawling, and will let you alone. Very fine, said St. Anthony, I see you, though I will not do you the honour to regard you: let us only attend to our good Saviour, who is attentive to succour us in a better and more solid way, than all the empty flourishes and bravadoes of the enemy are to hurt us. Let us calmly and firmly

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expect his help. It is for this end that he permits these illusions of the devil to fright us, and lets the bug-bears of temptations run about skipping this way, and that, in our fancy. No matter, though they perpetually cross our way. It is an excellent sign, when the enemy beats and thunders furiously at the gate; for it shows he cannot get what he would be at. Take special notice of this, that you may avoid scruples. Do not set yourself to combat the temptations that trouble you, by contesting or disputing with them; but simply and meerly turn your thoughts and heart to Jesus Christ crucified, as if you were going to give an affectionate embrace to his pierced side, or his wounded feet. I know no plainer temptations, as to your circumstances, than to break vows that you may fast; to presume that to be solitary is the best for you, when it is worse for the community; to wish to live to yourself alone, that you may live better to God; to enjoy perfectly your own will, that you may better

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rate  
unde

ter perform the will of God. What strange chimera's are these? To conceit that a wilful, humorous, harsh, eager, strong-head inclination (or rather imagination or fancy) is a kind of heavenly inspiration! What a contradiction is it, and what nonsense for any to leave off singing praises to God, and to keep silence, (as it were in despatch) at the divine offices ordained by the church, merely because it suits best with their humour to praise him in a corner! How unsufferable an extravagance is this!

Sometimes in temptations one may have recourse to exterior penance and mortification; for the sense of the pain puts the temptation out of their thoughts, and invites the divine mercy to assist us; and the devil is more willing to give over his siege when he sees our intestine enemy, and his confederate the flesh, subdued and kept under.

## C H A P. XVIII.

*Of Desires.*

**I**T is oft times good to desire, but we ought to see that our desires are well ordered; they ought to spring out (as it were) in their proper season, and not to exceed our power. God does more require of us fidelity in performing well those little matters which he has put in our power, than an ardent zeal to atchieve great matters which are beyond our ability to compass.

Practise those mortifications which present themselves to you most frequently; for this is your necessary duty: embrace heartily those crosses which our Lord sends you, without minding of what nature they are; for they are, for that very regard, the more precious.

There are certain desires which tyrannize over the heart; they well needs be absolute, and hate that  
any

any should oppose their designs. They would have no darkness while they are at their devotions, but all noonday; they would have all their exercises sweet and pleasant, without any repugnance or distraction: They would not have any temptation give us a sensible trouble: Nor are they content with such food as is of a good juice and nourishment; but they would have it sweetened with sugar and scented with musk. But such as these are the desires of a milk-sop-devotion, which I would wish you to avoid. Believe me my daughter, those meats that are sweet, if given to little infants, do engender worms; which is the reason why our Lord, to make them wholesome to us, mingles bitter things with them. The courage which we ought to have in serving God, must be nice and dainty, but strong and hardy; and such a one as, while it says resolutely, and without reserve, 'Let Jesus live in me', regards not whether it encounters with sweet or bitter,  
light



light or darkness. Let us, my dear daughter, follow this way of an effectual, strong, inflexible love of our God.

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## C H A P. XIX.

### *Of Dryness in Prayer.*

**W**HENEVER dryness in prayer afflicts you, turn your thoughts to your dear Saviour in the garden of Olivet, and see what a disconsolate dereliction he suffered. Consider how this dear son of the eternal Father, having begged comfort of him, thinks no more of it; but prepares himself to execute valiantly and courageously the work of our Redemption. After you have addressed your fervent prayer to God to give you comfort, and he is not pleased to grant it, cast it out of your thoughts, and stir up your courage to do the work of your salvation upon the cross he sends you, in such a manner as if you were never to come down

down again from that cross, but continue on it all your life.

We are to contemplate, and speak to God in thunder and whirlwinds; we are to consider him in the bush, nay among fire and thorns; and to do this with profit to our souls, we are to put off our shoes, and the common ways the generality treads, and to make an entire resignation and abnegation of our own wills. But we ought all the while rest assured that the divine goodness, which has brought us unto these afflictive torments, will strenghten us so, if we do our part, that we shall come out thence unburned, or unsinged.

It is his will that we should serve him without gusts or sensible feelings nay with contrasts and convulsions of spirit. This perhaps will give you no satisfaction, but it gives him content: he is pleased with it, though it displeases you. Wherefore your duty is so to manage and curb the briskness of your nature by holy humility, as if you were to live all your life in that

troublesome perplexity, without hoping to be released from it.

Alas! My dear daughter, our nature inclines us to an affectionate love of sweet, pleasing, and delicious consolation; yet, for all that, the roughness of this spiritual dryness yields better fruit, and is more profitable for us. And tho' St. Peter was in love with mount Thabor, and fled from mount Calvary; yet his soul reaped more fruit from this latter, than from the former; and the blood which was shed in one, is more to be valued than the brightness which shined in the other. Take good heed lest the consideration of your own nothingness, does not perplex you, however it may humble, sweeten, and abase you: it is only self-love, that makes us impatient when we see ourselves vile and abject.

You know well, that at the birth of our Saviour, there were heard divine hymns of the angelical choristers. The holy scripture tells you this, and you may be assured of it; but it does not tell you,

you, that our blessed lady and St. Joseph, who were nearest to our Saviour, heard this melody of the angels, or saw those marvellous lights; on the contrary, instead of hearing the angels sing, they heard the holy infant weep, and saw only by the borrowed light of some common lamp, the divine child bedewed with tears, and shivering at the rigour of the cold.

Hold this certain, that the gracious favour of meditating well, is not recovered by any struggling effort of your own spirit, but by a sweet and affectionate perseverance full of a profound humility.

C H A P.

## C H A P. XX.

*How to exercise our Union with God,  
amidst our Dryness.*

*First Point.* **H**A V I N G pro-  
strated, and pro-  
foundly humbled yourself before  
God, adore his sovereign good-  
ness, and fix your thoughts atten-  
tively on his gracious pleasure, and  
early bounty, which from all e-  
ternity did name you by your name,  
and determined to save you; a-  
mongst other things ordering for  
you this present day, that in it you  
might come to exercise those works  
which dispose you for eternal  
life, and salvation; according to  
the words of the prophet; I have  
loved thee with an eternal love,  
and therefore out of my pity and  
mercy I had for thee, I have drawn  
thee to me.

*Second Point.* Building upon this  
true thought, you are to unite  
your will with the will of your  
most bountiful heavenly Father,  
with.

with these or the like words :  
 “ Oh most kind and merciful will  
 “ of my God, be you for ever,  
 “ and in all things accomplished !  
 “ Oh eternal design of the will of  
 “ my God ! I adore you. I con-  
 “ secrate and dedicate to you my  
 “ will, that it may for ever will  
 “ what you have eternally willed.  
 “ Oh make me do, both this day,  
 “ and for ever hereafter, your di-  
 “ vine will in all things ! Yes,  
 “ my loving Creator, yes, my  
 “ dear heavenly Father, be it so ;  
 “ such was your good plea-  
 “ sure from all eternity : yes,  
 “ be it so ; O infinite, and in-  
 “ finitely to be beloved goodness !  
 “ let it be, Oh eternal will, as  
 “ you have willed ! Live and reign  
 “ in all the acts of my will, and  
 “ above them all both now, and  
 “ for ever.

*Third Point.* Next invoke thus,  
 the divine assistance, by crying  
 out interiorly from the bottom  
 of your heart ; “ Oh God ! be you  
 “ my aid ; I am yours, save me.  
 “ Let your favourable hand con-  
 duct

“ duct and direct this your poor,  
 “ miserable, and dejected crea-  
 “ ture. Behold, O Lord, this  
 “ wretched and weak heart of  
 “ mine, which has, through your  
 “ grace, conceived many holy  
 “ affections to serve you; but  
 “ alas! it is too weak and impo-  
 “ tent to bring any of them to ef-  
 “ fect without your gracious assist-  
 “ ance.

*Fourth Point.* Then invoke the  
 most blessed Mary, your good an-  
 gel, and all the court of heaven,  
 that they, and your Saviour would  
 please at this present to be propi-  
 tious to you. This done, make a  
 strong, lively, and amorous union  
 of your will with God's; and  
 afterwards in all the actions of that  
 day, whether they be spiritual or  
 corporal, still make frequent re-  
 unions; that is, renew and confirm  
 afresh the union made in the  
 morning; by only casting a simple  
 interior glance upon the divine  
 goodness, and saying, after the  
 manner of consent or acquiescence;  
 yes, Lord, yes, with all my heart;  
 or



or else, only yes Lord, yes, my Father, yes, yes. You may also now and then make the sign of the cross, or kiss it; for all this will put you in mind, and keep lively in your thoughts the resolutions you have made to submit yourself wholly to the will of God; that you do accept him for your only happiness, that you adore him and love him with all your heart, and unite your will inseparably to his sovereign will and pleasure.

*Fifth Point.* These affectionate wishes darted from the heart, and these interior words must issue thence, or be pronounced sweetly and calmly; strongly, but quietly; and as it were distilled gently upon the very point of your will. By which means those sacred words which drop into the soul, will penetrate better than if they were made by jaculatory prayers and brisk sallies of the spirit. Experience will inform you of this doctrine, if you be sincere and humble.

C H A P.

## C H A P. XXI.

*Concerning the Peace of the Soul,  
and true Humility.*

**T**HERE is nothing that gives us trouble and disquiet, but our self-love, and self-esteem; if we have not that melting tenderness of heart, those delicious gusts and sentiments when we are at prayer, we fall immediately into sadness and disorder. If we meet with any difficulties, if any rubs cross our designs, we bustle up presently, and exert all our strength to beat down those obstacles, and rid ourselves of them; which cannot be done without hurry and disquiet. And whence comes all this, but because we will needs be virtuous, by having every thing go smoothly and currently according to our wishes, and (as it were) by eating nothing but sugar; without casting our eye on our blessed Jesus, who, prostrate on the earth, sweats blood with the anguish he suffered.

suffered through the agonizing combat which he felt in his interior, by the contrariety and fight between the natural affections of the interior part of his soul, and the holy resolutions of the superior. Let us do three things, my dear daughter, and we shall preserve the peace of our soul.

The first is, to have a pure intention to desire in all things the honour and glory of God.

The second, let us do all we are able to attain this end.

The third, let us fix this truth in our minds, that God is called the prince of peace; and that wherever he is absolute master, he settles a profound, and total peace in the soul. It is true indeed, that before he can establish this peace in any place he raises a war there first, by stripping the heart and the soul from their most dear, familiar, and customary affections; such as are an inordinate love of themselves, self-reliance, and self-complaisance, &c. Yet even in doing this, we find some degree

gree of peace, by reason of our conformity to the will of God.

Consider our dear Saviour in the garden, and you will find that to be prince of peace, is to preserve our peace in the midst of war, and to enjoy sweetness in the midst of the bitterest afflictions. Which will teach you that all those thoughts that cause in you disquiet and turmoil of spirit, do not at all come from God who is the prince of peace, but are temptations of the enemy; and therefore we ought to restrain their motions, and not to regard or take notice of them.

We must in every thing, and at all times live peaceably, and this both in sadness and in joy. Is harm to be eschewed and avoided? Let us do it peaceably, quietly, and without disturbance. Is good to be done? Let us do that too peaceably; otherwise we shall fall into many faults, through precipitancy and too much haste. Nay, let us observe the same conduct even in our works

works of penitence, and perform them peaceably. Behold, says the holy penitent, holy David, the bitterness of the bitterness I suffer in peace. You ought to desire either to love God, or to die. There is no third or middle state desirable, but either love or death; for that life which is without this love, is worse than death. We can never give a more certain proof of our fidelity, than when we are beset on all sides with contrarieties. Let it be your special care to turn your soul to God when you are in trouble and disquiet. When you are wholly embarked amongst waves, and the most tempestuous hurricanes, then is the time to keep your soul fixed upon heaven, and say to your Lord; it is for you O my good God, it is for your sake I undertake this voyage; be you my guide, be you my pilot. This done, comfort yourself with this assurance, that when you once arrive at your secure harbour, the sweetness and content you will there experience, will quite efface  
and

and blot out the memory of the vexatious troubles you suffered in the way. Let us then pass on courageously through the most terrible storms, so we do but keep a right heart, a good intention, an eye fixed still upon God, and a confidence placed only in him. Do this, I say, and never fret yourself at the contrarieties which occur in your conversing with the world: they will do you service in affording you occasions to practise those most precious and charming virtues, which our Lord has recommended to you; and, believe me, true virtue no more thrives in exterior repose and quiet, than the best fishes are nourished in the puddled standing water of fens or marshes.

As for humility, it makes our heart kind and sweet, both towards the perfect and imperfect; towards those by respect, towards these by compassion. Humility makes us also welcome our sufferings sweetly, by knowing that we deserve them; and those goods that  
 befall

be fall us with a grateful reverence, by knowing that we do not deserve them at all.

Exercise yourself then very much in acts of humility, and of charity towards your neighbour; and be sure it will turn to a good account. It was fitting that blessed Magdalen should first wash the feet of our Lord, kiss them, and wipe them, before she could be cordially united to him by heavenly meditation; and pour her ointment upon his body, before she could pour forth the precious balm of contemplation, upon his divinity.

When you find yourself sick, or overwearied, it must be your exercise to accept and love holy abjection: by this means you will change the lead of your lumpish heaviness into gold; nay, for more refined gold, than are your most lively gaiety, and pleasantry of heart. Do not give way to any complaining language, or say you are miserable, unfortunate, or such like, but avoid them utterly; for they  
are



are the sallies of a heart too much dejected and overwhelmed with temporal afflictions, and are not so properly to be called impatience, as indignation and wrath.

Would you know in a word my daughter, what kind of adjections are the best? I answer, they are those which yourself did not chuse, or those which are least agreeable to you; or rather, those to which you have no kind of inclination; or to speak exactly, those which your vocation and profession put upon you.

Walk always in simplicity, and humility, without regarding whence you come, but in whose company you walk. It is in company of your king, your spouse, and your God crucified. And what is it to walk with your spouse crucified, but to abase, humble, and despise yourself? and this even to the death of his passion, nay till the death on the cross. But observe my good daughter, that I tell you once more, that this abasing,

abasing, humbling, and disregard of yourself, must be practised sweetly, peaceably, and constantly; nay moreover cheerfully, and joyfully. If any murmur at your good actions, and that you resent it, be sure you do this humbly, and lovingly, and then their murmurs will be turned to blessings.

God has been pleased to cast his eyes upon you, to serve him in an affair of consequence, and to draw you into an uncommon, and excellent sort of life; and to this end he has called you to religion; you ought therefore to have regard to the choice he has made of you, and faithfully to comply with his intention. Excite then continually your soul to be humble, and your humility will never want courage. God does call to his service, things that are not, as well as those which are, and serves himself of those which are as it were nothing, as well as those which are great and estimable, for the greater glory of his name. Continue then in  
your

your abjection, as in a kind of hatred, of any self-excellence of your own, and be courageously, and magnanimously humble in him, who placed the great effort of his power, in the humility of the cross.

Lessen yourself, every day more and more in your own eyes; good God! what a high greatness is this littleness, which thus enlarges the heart! so the love of God dwells in your heart, affect the glory, which this noble project, or high attempt of humility brings with it, and live ever joyful, victorious, and triumphant.

Cast your eye on the variety of saints, who beautify the heavenly Jerusalem, and ask them by what steps of virtue they climbed up to heaven; and they will tell you, that the apostles arrived there principally by love, the martyrs by constancy, the doctors by study of holy things, or meditation, the confessors by mortification, the virgins by purity of heart, and all of them in general by humility.

CHAP.

## C H A P. XXII.

*Of Generosity, or Christian Valour.*

**I** Can do all things, says St. Paul, in him who strengthens me. Humility, and generosity must ever go hand in hand. Humility makes us disconfident of ourselves, and generosity makes us place all our confidence in God. There are some who amuse themselves, with a false and foppish humility, which hinders them from considering in themselves, the good gifts which God has bestowed on them; such men are much in the wrong; the goods which God has put in us, require to be acknowledged, esteemed, and highly honoured. The common adage, or proverb, Know thyself, is not only to be understood of the knowledge of our own vileness and misery but also of knowing the excellence and dignity of our souls, which are capable to be united to the deity, by that sanctifying goodness,

E                      which

which has given us a certain instinct, making us always pretend, and tend to this union, in which consists all our happiness.

That humility that does not produce generosity, is most certainly false and counterfeit. For after humility has told us, I can do nothing, I am but a meer nothing; it ought to make place for christian generosity, which pronounces boldly, there is nothing, there can be nothing, which I cannot do while I put my trust in God, who can do all things; and, under the buckler of this confidence, does courageously enterprize all that he commands, let it be never so difficult. Let a soul thus armed, set herself to execute what God commands in the simplicity of her heart, and God will sooner do a miracle, than fail to give her power, to accomplish what she undertakes; because by relying solely on him, she makes his power hers. Say then undauntedly within yourself, since God has called me to such a high state of perfection,

perfection, who is he that dares pretend to hinder me from arriving at my end, since it belongs to him, to perfect that work, to which none but himself gave a beginning. But this must be done without presumption, and must not excuse us from standing on our guard, lest through our carelessness we come to fall short. And yet this very confidence thus grounded, makes us more vigilant and careful, to do our utmost to advance our souls in perfection.

It may indeed very well happen, that the inferior part of our souls, gives some trouble to the superior, and hinders it from prosecuting her good designs, or intentions; but a soul truly generous, laughs at all such attempts and slights them; and instead of heeding them, she sets herself with a willing simplicity, to perform the exercise which is enjoined her; without speaking so much as one word, or doing the least action that signifies any sentiment, that she has of her own inability or incapacity.

## C H A P. XXIII.

*Of Tranquility of Spirit.*

**W**HILE we are engaged in business, we must study to preserve still a due calmness or tranquility of heart, and to keep our soul (as well as we may) sweetly employed in prayer. Let the soul at such seasons, take her own flight. If she flies to any height, let her do so, hinder her not; if she inclines to change her thoughts, to any other matter or object, do not stop her inclination; she may still preserve the most excellent tranquility of mind, that can be by simply reposing her will, in a sincere desire to see God, to wish nothing but God, nor to relish any thing but him alone.

Enure your heart, by frequent exercise, to interior and exterior sweetness, and keep it calm among the multiplicity of business which present themselves. Give not way, by any means, to be hurried,



hurried, which is the pest of all devotion; keep your soul continually above, so that she may have still the upper hand of all sublunary affairs, by not lending an eye to this world, but to despise it, not to time itself otherwise, than to aspire by it to eternity.

Practise yourself frequently in the submission of your will to God's: and be ready to adore him as heartily when he sends you afflictions, as when he caresses you with consolations. Behave yourself sweetly and obligingly in all your actions: for every one justly expects from you this good example. It is easy to guide a bark when the wind is still, and the sea calm. Nor is it any mastery to pass ones life with moderation, and sweetness, when they are exempt from business; but it is difficult to keep our conversation steady, and even in the midst of tempests. Great care therefore is to be used how you manage all your actions and intentions in such occasions, so as to keep your heart affable,

affable, just, sweet, humble and generous.

Observe, I say, a sweetness in your demeanour. Do not give way to your humours and your inclinations, but, as both reason and devotion require, be kind and humble towards all. Endeavour to frame your spirit to peaceableness, and tranquility, and stifle those bad propensions, which would warp your soul, by practising carefully the contrary virtues. Resolve to be particularly diligent and attentive in this exercise. Four things I have to say to you on this occasion, which I would wish you to observe. All your harm comes from those vices that you so dread. Love virtue, and you will pursue it. Bring your mind by serious consideration, to love the practice of charitable sweetness, and take delight in exercising humility. Do this, my dear daughter, and you will be a generous and heroical christian. But to do this well, you must often think of it, and lay it to heart;  
God

God will reward your endeavours with a thousand consolations. Raise then your heart often towards God, in whom your eternal reward is stored up. If you be not esteemed here, so much the better. Love that very abjection, and your reward is secure. Believe me, God looks with a more favourable eye upon those who are despised here; and what is held most vile by the world, is most agreeable to him, and most precious in his sight.

God is so good, that he visits us interiorly, when we are visited by crosses and contradictions; and he will not fail to strengthen and establish you in solid humility, simplicity and mortification. Live then as joyful as is possible, with this excellent joy, which peace and devotion bring along with them; of which joy the love of abjection is the fruitful root.

Let your life be wholly woven of humility, sweetness, and passionate affection, for your heavenly spouse; and do not trouble yourself

yourself at all that you cannot call to mind, or reflect on all your little failings, to accuse yourself of them in confession. No, my daughter, let not this trouble you; for as you fall often into such imperfections without being aware of them; so you often raise yourself again when you do not at all perceive it, nor reflect on it.

But take heed of hurry and precipitancy: It will writhe the thread you are spinning into knots, and ravel all your work. Let us still continue going forwards though we advance never so slowly, we shall gain much ground. Be not afflicted, if God seems to leave you in the mid-way, for his greater glory, and your greater profit. It is his will that his misery should be the throne of our mercy, and our weakness the seat of his omnipotence.

Once more, I say, love your abjection. But you will say my understanding is utterly dark and unable to do any good. Very well; it is so: but if you continue humble, calm, sweet humoured,  
and

and confident in God amidst this obscurity, if you give no way to impatience, nor hurry yourself through an imprudent haste, if you be not at all disturbed at this obscurity, but, (I do not say joyfully, but) heartily, frankly, and firmly, embrace his cross, and remain in this gloomy darkness, you will by this means gain this precious love of abjection; for to be spiritually abject, is nothing else, but to be thus dark, blind, and impotent. Love yourself as such, for his love, who willed you should be such, and then you will love your own abjection; which is the most efficacious means to gain this tranquility of heart.

## C H A P. XXIV.

*Of Holy Obedience.*

**O**UR Saviour said to St. Peter, 'When thou wast young, thou didst gird thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest, but when thou shalt come to be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hand, and another shall bind thee.'

They are yet young learners and novices in the love of God, who use to gird themselves; they make choice of such mortifications as best delight them; they, at their pleasure, pitch upon such and such penances, resignations and devotions, and mingle the doing their own will with doing the will of God. But the veterane and old masters in spirituality, suffer themselves to be bound, and girded by others, and submit to the yoke, which they lay upon them, and force themselves to go into such ways, as are contrary to their inclination; they (in some sort) voluntarily

voluntarily suffer themselves to be governed against their will; saying within themselves, obedience is better than sacrifice. By which we see, in how high a manner they glorify God, by not only crucifying their flesh, but even their spirit.

Keep then your heart open, free, and strongly bent to perform exactly what your superior shall impose upon you; for after the measure that (by virtue of holy obedience) you shall undertake any thing for God's sake, he will second you, and help to do your business with you, if you have but a will to do this with him: for his only business is to sanctify and perfect your souls.

Let this be your grand employ; and do it humbly, simply, and confidently. Do this, I say, and you can never receive any distraction that can do you harm. That peace is not as it ought to be which refuses any labour, or trouble, which tends to glorify God's name.

You



You are in a great error, my daughter, if you think that any thing will bring you to perfection without obedience, which is the dearly esteemed virtue of God, your heavenly spouse; in which, by which, and for which, he was pleased to die on the cross. Many religious persons, and others too, have become saints without mental prayer; but none did ever arrive at that dignity, without obedience.

True, you ought to love prayer, but yet you ought not to love it, but only for the love you bear to God: wherefore, he that thus loves it, loves no more of it, than it pleases God to give him; and God wills not to give him more than obedience permits. Reduce then your heart to the pliability of a little infant; let your will be waxen-natured, apt to receive any impression, and your spirit naked and stripped of any kind of affection, save only to love God. As for the means to procure this love, let them be indifferent to you.

Happy

Happy you, if you live your whole life meekly and holily amongst the greatest pains for the love of God.

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## CHAP. XXV.

### *Of Submission.*

**I**F you do not become as little infants, you can have no part in the kingdom of God. How great a good is it, my daughter, to be pliable, and facile; and disposed to bend gently, and without force and reluctance, to every occasion! The saints have taught us this submission of our will by their practice; but our Saviour has inculcated it to us both by his word and example.

What is the evangelical counsel of abnegation of ourselves, but to renounce in every occasion our proper will and proper judgment, to follow the will of another, and to submit ourselves in all things; excepting nevertheless, such

such as offended God, and are against his holy law? But you will say, I see evidently that this which I am willed to do, proceeds from a human will, and a natural inclination; and therefore God has not inspired my mother, superior, nor my sisters to make me do these things. Perhaps he has not; but notwithstanding, he has most certainly ordered you to perform what they enjoin you; and if you refuse to do it, you violate and break your holy purpose, to obey God's will in all things; and by consequence, you neglect the care you ought to have of living up to a state of perfection. Wherefore, to perform the will of God, you must always submit your will to do what they order, so it be not contrary to the will of God, signified to you in his holy commandments.

But to add one word more concerning the will of creatures; it may be understood after three manners; by manner of affliction, by way of complaisance, or else when it

it is no particular purpose at all, as far as we know.

As for the first, you ought to be very steady to follow such wills as are contrary to yours, were there no other reason but because our will cannot endure to be contradicted; and in this regard you ought to labour earnestly in practising to follow the wills of others, which generally are opposite to your own.

You ought therefore to undergo this mortification of following the wills of others, as an occasion of suffering some affliction for God's sake; and to make your best use of such daily contradictions, to strengthen your spirit in humility, by accepting them calmly and sweetly.

As for the manner of complaisance, there needs no exhortation to persuade us to follow the wills of others in such occasions; for we are apt enough of our own accord to be obedient in such things as are agreeable to us; rather in such occasions we prevent their  
wills

wills by frankly offering our submissions. It is not then of this sort of will that submission is required, there being here no doubt of our compliance: it is then of the third sort of wills which is besides our intencion, and of which we cannot comprehend, or guess at the reason, why they should require this submission of us. And this is that, which gives us our spiritual advantage. You will say why, or for what reason, should I rather do my sister's will, than my own? Is not my will in this slight occurrence, as conformable to God's will as hers? Upon what ground ought I to judge that what she bids me do, is the will of heaven rather than the will I have to do otherways? Ah! my dear sister, it is true, it is in this occasion that the divine majesty will have us earn the reward of our submission; for if we see that another has power to command us, or that she intreats us to do such or such a thing, it can never be much meritorious to do it; nor we in doing

ing it, overcome any great natural repugnance, because our own propension sways our will to accomplish it; but when the reasons are hid from us; then, then it is, that our will repugns, our judgment flies off, and we resent the opposition. It is in these occasions we must excel ourselves, get the upper hand of our selfish nature, and with the simplicity of an infant, or innocent child, do what others will us to do without expecting discourses or reasons, and say within ourselves; I know it is the will of God, that I should rather do my neighbour's will than my own; and therefore I set myself to do it, without troubling myself to reflect whether it be the will of God, that I should submit myself to do what (perhaps) may proceed from passion, or natural inclination, or perhaps from some good intention, or some rational motive. For in such petty concerns as these, the best way is to walk simply. What a folly would it appear to stand meditating an hour to know whether

ther it is the will of God, whether I should do this or the other, in things of such slight importance, that they are not worth considering? Especially when I see I shall give some content to my neighbour, in doing what he desires. Even in things of consequence we should not lose time in considering them; but apply to our superiors to know what we ought to do, and this done, think no more of them, but rest absolutely upon their judgment whom God has given us to conduct our souls in the perfection of his holy love.

But if we ought thus to condescend to the wills of every ordinary person, much more ought we to comply with the wills of our superiors, whom we ought to look upon as those, who bear God's place. Whence, though we do not know them exempt from natural inclinations, and even from some passions; and that out of some emotion of those passions they sometimes commanded, or reprehended their inferiors, yet we are not to wonder



wonder at it: for they are made of the same corrupt mould as other men are, and consequently are subject to have their inclinations, and passions. Yet, for all that, we are not at liberty to judge, that what they command us springs from that bias. Nay, though we knew certainly it did so, yet we ought not refuse to obey them with all the submission imaginable, and this sweetly and cordially, and to subject ourselves to their correction. I know it is something hard, and against the grain of our self-love, to be obnoxious to those ill-relishing accidents; but it is not the satisfaction of this sort of love that we ought to regard in such occurrences; but only the holy love of our dear Jesus; who requires of all his beloved spouses, that they imitate his perfect obedience; who not only rendered himself up entirely to the will of his heavenly Father, but also to the will of his parents here on earth; nay more, of his very enemies; who no doubt followed the rude impulse of their passions,

passions, laying such torments upon his innocency; yet, notwithstanding our blessed Jesus submitted himself to all their fury sweetly calmly, and meekly. By which we see that his command to us of taking up his cross and following him ought to be thus understood; that we must welcome all contradictions which assault us in every occurrence whatever, by the virtue of holy obedience; whether they be great ones, or of never so little weight or importance.

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## C H A P. XXVI.

*Of the Holy Simplicity, with which we ought to leave ourselves to the Conduct of others.*

**Y**OU desire, my dear daughter, to be informed, in what consists the simplicity by which we learn the conduct of our interior, both to God, and to those he has set over us.

There

There are some souls who pretend they will not resign the conduct of their souls to any, but only to the spirit of God, and they take a conceit, that all that their imagination represents to them lively is the inspiration or motion of the Holy Ghost, which takes them by the hand and leads them like little children; which is most certainly a great illusion. For was there ever a more particular vocation than that of St. Paul, in which our Saviour spoke himself to convert him? Yet nevertheless, he did not think fit to instruct him himself, but sent him to Ananias.

The conduct by which God guides us, is only that of obedience. If you take not that road, there is nothing but error and wandering. True, we are not all of us led by the same way; but it is true withal, that every particular man, does not know the way which is proper for him, or by which God intends to leave him. This is a knowledge reserved to our superiors, to whom therefore God gives

gives light how to direct those under their charge. You are not permitted to allege, that they are not well acquainted with our manner of spirit; but to believe firmly, that our obedience and submission, are the certain marks of a true inspiration, although it should happen that we have no comfort in the exercise they injoin us, and find more content in others. For our own content and satisfaction is not the test, by which we are to judge of the goodness of our actions. To be addicted only to our own satisfaction, is the same, as to be fond of flowers, and neglect the fruit. You will gain more spiritual profit by that which you do by the direction of your superiors, than by following those kind of interior instincts, which generally have no better origin than our own self-love; which under the colour of goodness, makes us affect our own complaisance, and foment in us a vain esteem of ourselves.

It

It is a great truth, that all your good depends upon your suffering yourself to be led, and governed by the spirit of God, and this without any reserve; and it is this very thing which true simplicity, recommended to you by our Lord, pretends to bring to effect. Be simple or innocent as doves, says he to his apostles. But he stops not here; but tells them moreover, that if they do not become as simple as little children, they cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. An infant, while it is little, is such a pattern of true simplicity, that it knows nothing but what its mother tells it; it has no other love but for its mother; and by the means of this love, but one only pretension, which is to be still in its mother's lap; and being once reposed in that beloved place, it is fully satisfied, and seeks no further.

The soul which has attained to perfect simplicity, has no love but for God; and in loving him no other pretension but to repose herself

self in the breast of her heavenly father; and, like a loving infant, there to abide for ever; leaving all the care of herself, entirely to his fatherly goodness, troubling herself no farther about any other concern but to preserve herself in this holy confidence and dependance on him; nay she is not solicitously troubled to acquire even those virtues, and favours which seem to be necessary. It is true indeed, that she neglects no duty that comes in her way; but it is also true, that she does not hurry or force herself to gain perfection, by any other means which are prescribed her.

And indeed to what end should any be desirous of those virtues, which do not come in our circumstances to practise? Sweetness in conversation, love of our abjection, humility, tender charity, and cordial love of our neighbour, together with obedience, are the virtues, the practise of which belongs to the whole community, and are necessary for it; frequent occasions

casions of exercising them, still presenting themselves to those who live in our condition. As for constancy, magnificence, and such other virtues that lie out of our road, let us not trouble ourselves about them. We shall not be one jot less magnificent, and generous spiritually, though we neglect them.

You will ask me how those who are addicted to prayer, to this holy simplicity, and this casting themselves entirely upon God, are to govern themselves in all their actions? I answer, that not only in prayer but in the conduct of their whole lives, they ought to walk on steadfastly in the spirit of simplicity; abandoning and remitting all their actions, and the success of them, to the good pleasure of God; leaving themselves by a love, accompanied with a perfect and entire confidence to the mercy, and the care of that eternal love, which the divine providence has for them; and to this end, let them persist firmly in this course, without giving way to stand reflecting



reflecting on themselves, as to what they do, or whether they are satisfied or no with their actions. Alas! it is not our contentment or satisfaction, which makes us satisfactory in God's sight; rather they only serve to content this wretched love and solicitude we have for ourselves, without reference to God. Those little infants, whom our Lord has chosen for the model of our perfection, are not anxiously afraid of every thing they do in the presence of their father or mother. They keep close to them without reflecting on the satisfaction or comfort, which they take in them; though they do in good earnest, and after their simple manner, enjoy a high content without curiously enquiring with or how it comes. Their love so takes up their whole thought that they can attend to nothing else.

He who bends his care affectionately to please his heavenly lover, has neither will, nor leisure to look back upon himself; because he continually strains his steps for-

wards

wards towards that quarter his love carries him.

This exercise of giving up himself continually into the hands of God, does in an excellent manner comprize all the perfection of the other exercises, belonging to a most perfect simplicity and purity of heart; and, as long as he pleases to continue us in this employment, we ought not to change it.

Those spiritual lovers, and spouse of the King of heaven, do take an exact view of themselves from time to time as the doves do who are near the chrystal water; to see if they be drest up in such a manner as to please their lover. This is performed by the examine of their consciences, by which they trim up, purify, and adorn their soul, after the most curious garb they are able; not with an intention to make themselves perfect, or to satisfy their own fancy, nor yet for the desire they have to make a great progress in virtue, but purely to obey their spouse out of the respect they bear him, and for the

extream desire they have of giving him content. And, can there be a love more excellently pure, more clean, and more simple, and unmingled with any other consideration whatever than this is? Since they do not purify themselves that themselves may be pure; nor dress themselves, that themselves may be beautiful; but aim merely, and solely to please their lover; to whom, if a negligent, and less handsome garb were more agreeable, they would effect it full as much, as they do the most charming and most beautiful mode that can be. Observe how the simple and undesigning doves do not employ much care, nor any long time, nor any study or haste to watch and trick up themselves; because the confidence which their love gives them, makes them rely on the love and kindness of their lover, and that they will be heartily loved by him; which takes from them all over-busy and distrustful care that they are not handsome enough. Besides that, the greater

greater desire they have to love, than to dress up and prepare themselves for love, cuts off all curious solicitude, and makes them content themselves with a sweet and amorous preparation to love their lover entirely and cordially.

Cast entirely all your whole heart, all your pretensions, all your solicitude, and all your affections on the fatherly bosom of God; and he will conduct and bring them whither his love sees best. Let us hear and imitate our divine Saviour, as the devout Psalmist represents the sovereign efforts of his love on the tree of the cross, which he concludes in these words. My Father, into your hands I commend my spirit: after we have said this, my dear daughter, what remains more but to expire and die on the cross, by a death caused by love; no more living to ourselves, but desiring that Jesus Christ may live in us. This once happily atchieved, immediately all the disquiets of our heart, which self-love, and the over tender

der regard we have for ourselves suggests, will die too. It is these which secretly prompt us to run hastily in quest of our own satisfactions, and our own proper perfections. When we are embarked in the exercises of our vocation, and carried on with a favourable gale of this simple, and loving confidence in God, we shall make a great progress without perceiving that we stir; we shall advance without giving ourselves the trouble of walking; and we shall rid much ground, though we seem not to stir from our place; like those who sail smoothly in the open sea with a propitious wind.

When the soul is arrived to this happy state, then all chances, and variety of accidents which happen to us, are received sweetly and contentedly. For what can shock, or disturb a soul which is settled in God's hand, which reposes itself in his bosom, which is wholly given over, and dedicated to his love, and perfectly resigned to his good pleasure?

Certainly

Certainly, such a soul in all occurrences will, without speculating upon their causes, heartily repeat and pronounce that holy acquiescence of our Saviour: Yes Father, for so it seemed good in your eyes.

Before we leave this point, let us add a word concerning prudence, seeing our Saviour has joined them together when he said; be prudent as serpents, and simple as doves. This virtue of prudence must not be neglected in our practice, it being as it were a spiritual salt, which gives taste and savour to all the other virtues. But yet it ought to be so practised by those who are religious, that the virtue of a simple confidence in God, do still keep the upper hand; for it is only this that can make them continue reposed in the arms of their heavenly father, and in the protection of the B. Virgin their patroness and dearest mother, or hope firmly for her prayers and intercession for them, to her adorable Son: which they may, if thus disposed, be assured of, since

since they are assembled in a community for the glory of God and for her honour.

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## C H A P. XXIX.

### *Of Religious Simplicity.*

**S**IMPLICITY is nothing but an act of pure charity that regards only one end, which is to acquire in a perfect manner the love of God: and our soul is then arrived to this simplicity, when we have no other pretension, or designs in all we do but that. It is an act of refined and unmixt charity. It is that *Unum Necessarium*, that only one necessary thing recommended by our Saviour. Lastly, it is an inseparable companion of charity, since it aims directly at God, and is inconsistent with any mixture of self-interest, for in that case, it were rather to be called duplicity, which squints two ways, than simplicity, which confines and rivets its whole view at one only; that  
is,



is, it To regards God, that it lends not a glance to any creature.

Simplicity does quite banish out of the soul, that care and solicitude, with which many perplex themselves unprofitably, in seeking out a great number of exercises, and, (as they call them) means how they may come to love God; and they take a conceit that unless they do all that the former saints have done, they can never think they have done enough to obtain it. Poor souls! They torment themselves to find out a kind of art how to come at the love of God, and do not consider that there is no such art of loving him, but merely to love him; they imagine that there is a kind of mysterious method of gaining this love, when plain and artless simplicity does the whole business alone.

After a soul endowed with simplicity has done any action, which she judges it is her duty to do, she thinks no more of it; and if it slip into her thoughts what others

will say or think of her, she endeavours to break that thought off in the middle, and stop the progress of it, because she cannot endure any thing should wave aside or warp her intention, which is to keep an attentive eye to her God, and to encrease the love of him in her will. The consideration of creatures, are the least part of her motive, because she reserves all to her Creator. If she sees it expedient to do this or that, she sets about it, let what God pleases succeed of it. Having once done her duty, all her care is over; yet, notwithstanding all this, she may perhaps feel some kind of trouble, but let her not fear it, nor regard it. It is only in the inferior part of her soul, nor ought it to shock us, as long as we do not deliberately consent to the suggestion.

The soul endowed with this virtuous and wise simplicity, concerns not herself with what others do, or will do. She thinks only of what becomes her; nor does she  
 spend

spend, even on doing her duty, more thoughts than are necessary. As for other persons, or other matters she quickly turns her thoughts from them, for they are none of her business. This virtue has a meer affinity with humility, which does not permit us to have an ill opinion of any but of ourselves.

You will ask how we are to serve this holy simplicity in our conversation, and recreations. I answer in the same manner, as in all our other actions: only in these, we must use a holy freedom and liberty, in entertaining ourselves in such subjects, as are proper for the season and genius of joy and recreation. You must strive to be very genuine and unaffected in your conversation, and yet not inconsiderate or too eager; in regard that simplicity still follows the same rule that the love of God does. And though you happen to say some little thing, which seems not to be so well received by all, as you would wish, you

you must not trouble yourself to  
 stand poising, or reflecting upon  
 every word: no, by no means;  
 for it is certainly self-love, which  
 puts you upon critical niceties and  
 considering, whether what we  
 say or do does not offend, but is  
 well received. Holy simplicity  
 does not roam after its words and  
 actions, with that scrupulous care;  
 but leaves the success of them to  
 divine providence, to which it is  
 most highly, and indissoluble  
 attached. It neither turns to the  
 right nor the left, but marches  
 in a direct path right forwards;  
 only, if it meets in its way any op-  
 portunity of exercising any virtue,  
 it is careful not to let slip that occa-  
 sion, it being one of the proper  
 means to arrive at perfection, that is,  
 at the love of God; but yet it  
 does not hurry itself, or run out  
 of the way to seek for such occa-  
 sions, but lays hold of them when  
 they are presented. Nor yet does  
 it despose or disdain any thing nor  
 trouble herself about any thing,  
 but remains quiet and peaceable;  
 resting

resting assured, that God knows the bottom of our heart, and her true desire to please him, which is all such a soul cares for. But how can we make two things that seem so contrary hang together? On the one side, we are told we must still have a great care of our perfection and advancement in virtue; and on the other, that we must not think of it. I answer, you are not forbid to think of it but not to think of it with hurry and disquiet.

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## C H A P. XXVIII.

### *Of the Manner to receive Corrections.*

**Y**OU desire to know, my daughter, how you ought to receive corrections in the best manner, without having any sentiment, or sense of them; or any dryness of spirit, while they are inflicted on you. To keep yourself from having any sense of them is impossible; such motions are necessary and natural. Happy should we be if  
we

we could have this sort of perfection for one quarter of an hour before we die. But what is to be done at that season to keep our spirit calm and quiet? You are to cling close to our Lord; to reject as well you can this sentiment, by speaking and addressing to our Lord about some other subject. But, you will say, the sense of your pains is not appeased by doing so, rather it forces you to consider the harm they do you. Alas! that is not a fit time to submit your judgment so, as to make you believe and acknowledge, that your correction is good and convenient for you; no, this is to be done when your soul is calmed, and appeased. Firm and resolute not to consent to the passion you feel, or second its suggestions in your words or actions, though the reasons seem never so good on your side; for, at that penal season, we shall never want reasons, rather they will present themselves by heaps. But you are not to give credit to any of them, how excellent and evident soever they seem. Keep your  
spirit

spirit up close to God, (as was said) diverting your thought after you are humbled submissively applying to the divine majesty, and speaking with him of another different matter. Mark well what I here recommend to you, I repeat it here because of the great profit it will bring you. Humble yourself with a sweet and peaceable humility, and not with a humility, that is angry and chagrine. For such is our misfortune, that we oftentimes offer to God, acts of a fretful and vexed humility. Such acts are fruitless, nor do they ever calm our spirits. Let us then on the contrary make those acts before the divine goodness, with a loving and sweet confidence in him. If we do thus, we shall find our Souls reduced to their former tranquility, and we shall disavow and reject very easily all those reasons, (for they are generally most unreasonable) which our proper judgment and self-love suggested; and shall apply ourselves with the same affability to converse with those



those who gave us this Correction, or were the cause of our vexatious pain, as we did formerly.

You will say, you could overcome yourself so far, as to speak to those persons who inflict this correction; but, if they do not answer you civilly and agreeably, it redoubles and reinforces the temptation. All this springs from the same mischievous root now spoke of. What is it to you, or what are you the worse, whether people speak to you on one matter, or another, so you stand firm in doing your duty, and bearing yourself as becomes you? All accounts cast up, there is no person (not even the saints themselves) who has not an aversion to correction; yet still their virtue consisted in this, that they did nothing in favour of the sentiment they had of their pain, nor were transported by it, to any indecent word or action; but they made their advantage of it, by recovering their prayer better, and abandoning themselves to mortification.

But

But you will say, that you submit with all your heart to the correction, as just and reasonable; but yet it gives you great confusion and trouble, to think that you have given occasion to your superior to be angry; whence you cannot approach to her with the same confidence as formerly, though you love the abnegation, which proceeds from your fault. Even this too, my daughter, proceeds from the suggestion of self-love. You consider not, that you have a kind of Convent within yourself, of which self-love is the superior, and as such, it imposes penances; and this pain you now complain of, is the penance it puts on you, for your having offended the superior; for which, perhaps, she will not esteem you so much as she would have done, if you had not slid. What is to be done in this case? Humble yourself, and have patience.

CHAP.

But

## C H A P. XXIX.

*Concerning Aversions.*

**A**VERSIONS are certain disinclinations, which sometimes are natural, and give us a certain loathing or dislike of some other persons, so that we do not love their conversation. I mean that we have not the same content in their company, as we have in that of others for whom we have a sensible affection, by reason of a kind of alliance, and agreeableness between their humour and ours.

When I find this aversion prompting me to avoid their conversation, whom I know to be persons of great virtue, by which I might reap much profit, I ought not to give way to my aversion so as to shun their company; but I must strive to make it submit to reason; so as either voluntarily to seek after, or at least admit quietly and contentedly their conversation when I happen to meet them.

But

But how shall we remedy these aversions since perhaps there are not any so perfect, that they are exempt from them. Those who are of a rougher nature dislike those of a sweet and very obliging humour, and esteem them too easy and mean, even though this kind of genius is generally the most amiable quality that can be. The only remedy of this evil (and the same may be said of all other temptations) is to divert our thoughts from thinking of that humour of theirs, to which we have an aversion. But our mischief is, that we will needs set ourselves to speculate, whether we have reason or no for our particular aversion of such a person. But, by no means ought we to give way to such a research; for our self-love, which never sleeps, will so gild the ill, that we shall easily believe it is good; I mean it will persuade us that we have reasons, which seem to us good ones; and when these have past the examination of our proper judgment and self-love,

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We are easily reduced to think them very reasonable. Great care is to be had in this occasion, and therefore it being of importance, I will a little more enlarge upon it.

I say then, that we have never any reason at all for this aversion, much less ought we to foment and nourish it, by going along with it. Wherefore, when those aversions are natural, the best way is to divest your thoughts from heeding them; by which means we may cozen our nature, from breaking out into actual disgusts. But if that will not do, we must proceed further; we must fight them, and conquer them; when once we perceive that they pretend to violate the subjection, which we owe to our reason (whose dictates will never suffer us to do any thing in favour of these aversions) in the same manner, as we combat our bad inclinations, lest they bring us to offend God. Indeed, when we second them no farther, than barely to speak less kindly to the disagreeable

able person, than we would to others whom we much affect, it is no such heinous matter. Perhaps it is scarce in our power to do otherwise, when we are actually solicited by this ill-humoured, passion; nor do I judge this will be required of us.

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## CHAP. XXX.

### *Of Conversation.*

**A**S for your conversation, let it be your care it be always equal, sweet, and kind. This will repress the sallies of your nature, when they are too brisk and earnest. Above all, be humble and sweet in your carriage; strive to advantage yourself by sufferings; accepting them affectionately for his dear love who suffered so much for us.

While you are performing your daily duties, take heed your love be not so much engaged in any thing, that it be not put out of its  
right

right course; and be sure to keep fast hold still of the hand of the Lord. If you find yourself too much entangled and troubled, the first thing you do, reduce your spirit to calmness, and represent to yourself the mother of God, and how sweetly she was employed, while she wrought with one of her hands and arms, and held her infant Jesus in the other.

In the time of peace and tranquillity, enure your soul to this sweetness by multiplied acts; for, by this means you will tame the ungovernable, and untractable wildness of your spirit, and reduce it to meekness.

You must labour also to acquire sweetness of heart towards your neighbour; looking on him as on the work of God's own hand, who by the same goodness, is made to enjoy the same celestial joy and happiness which is prepared for us. Besides, those whom our Lord bears with, we ought to bear with also tenderly, and to suffer their  
spiritual



spiritual infirmities with a kind compassion.

You must hold very firmly to the cross of our Lord, that you may walk securely amongst those crouds of dangers, with which you must expect to be assaulted, in the various conversations and rencounters, which you are to meet with and pass through. You must keep yourself balanced every motion you make, with the counterpoise of his divine will, to whom you have vowed your body and your heart. Look carefully to that heart for which the heart of God himself was sad even to death; mortify it in its excessive and vain joys, and rejoice and cheer it up in its mortifications. Walk on still courageously from virtue to virtue, till you have attained the sovereign height of divine love; which yet, you will never compass in this life, because this sacred virtue will never receive any stint, any more, than does its object, which is the divine goodness.

-I say,

I say, you must persist firm and immutable in two precious virtues; the sweetest charity towards your neighbour, and the most amiable, and that is the most profound humility towards God : and I hope you will fail in neither, but that our great God who has taken you by the hand to lead you to himself, will not leave you till he has lodged you in his tabernacle.

Tear out of your heart from the very root, all desire of preference and precedency. It is impossible you should ever gain so great honour as in despising it, for this sets you above it. When honour comes once to give your heart a real trouble, both this sweetness of charity and your humility are in a safe port. My dear daughter, observe well the precept of the Saints; who have all of them admonished those who would be perfect, to speak either little, or not at all of themselves, or what belongeth to themselves. Go on then in this track, and your peace will be confirmed to you; when  
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the lute is out of tune, you must neither throw it by, nor break the strings; but lay your ear to it gently and attentively, to know where the fault lies, and softly stretch or slacken the string, as art shall instruct you.

Sprinkle all the parts of your conversation with sincerity, and cheerfulness both interior and exterior; not omitting sweetness of charity, especially towards your dear sisters, with whom the hand of providence has associated you, and bound you to them by a heavenly tie; support them, love them, caress them, and put them in your bosom as your dearest friends.

G

CHAP.

## C H A P. XXXI.

*Of Sweetness, or Pliableness of Spirit.*

**I**T is worth your while to make often a particular exercise of Sweetness, and acquiescence to the divine will; and this not always in great and extraordinary matters, but generally, for small and ordinary trifles: prepare yourself for this exercise in the morning, after dinner, and after vespers. But do this with a glad and cheerful heart. If some failings should happen, humble yourself for them, and begin again with courage.

Be very affable and courteous towards all, especially those who are of your own order. Do nothing in haste but go on calmly and sweetly, supporting one another, and keep your spirit within itself, and in a due restraint. Alas! says king David, my heart has forsaken me; our spirit will never leave us, if we do not leave it: let us keep it still in our hands

as St. Catharine of Sienna, and St. Dennis advise us.

Do all that is ordered you quietly and prudently, and converse peaceably with all. Pursue those actions, which you see may be done with love, and pass over these which cannot be done without contest. When one has to do with many Persons, it is to be expected your spirit will be haunted with some aversions and repugnances. But you must look upon these as on so many occasions offered to exercise true virtue, and tender charity. You are to do your duty towards all lovingly, though it goes never so much against the grain of your nature.

Fix then your heart every morning, in the posture of humility, sweetness, and peaceableness. Do the same after dinner and vespers, and now and then in the other times of the day. I doubt not, but you have often occasion to exercise the love of being disregarded, and held an abject, and good for nothing, and this in diverse occasions.

lay hold greedily on these rencounters to make your advantage of them. It is a main point of humility to welcome such occurrences, especially when you are to converse with those who are opposite to you.

Be never importunately curious and nice, with those who are of a different humour; but continue humble, submissive, sweet and peaceable with them, and your virtue will deserve to be esteemed admirable. Those humilities which are least discernable, are the most refined and most perfect. A continual evenness of humour, a constant sweetness of spirit, is far more rare and excellent, than perfect chastity; and therefore it is a most desirable, and most amiable virtue.

CHAP.

## C H A P. XXXII.

*Of Modesty*

**T**HERE are three sorts of modesty, or moderation in our demeanour. The first, which particularly claims the title to that name, does eminently excel the other two: and it consists in the decent comportment of our exterior, which is, for very many reasons, most highly to be commended. For, first it deserves our particular regard, because it renders us very submissive to others. This is that which enhances its value; for that which does render us subject to others for God's sake, is of great merit, and marvelously pleasing to his divine majesty.

The second reason is, because it makes us thus subject, not only in some few occasions, but in all times, and in all places, whether we be alone or in company. I say at all times, even when we are sleeping. Good God! how modestly and devoutly



voutly should we lay ourselves down to rest, did we reflect that God's holy eyes were then looking upon us! We should doubtless lay our arms across, over our breast with the greatest devotion. It is modesty then that keeps us subject and respectful in every circumstance of our life, because the holy angels, and our infinitely holy God himself are always present to us; and it is for their seeing us, and for their sakes, that we behave ourselves thus modestly.

This virtue is also as much to be recommended to us, because it edifies our neighbour: Insomuch, that a simple exterior modesty, has wrought the conversion of many a soul. It is a kind of a silent sermon: It is a virtue which St. Paul does in a particular manner recommend to us, saying, "Let your modesty appear before all men." Modesty, casts a considerable eye upon three things; the time, the place and the person. For would not he who looks grave, and would by no means laugh in the circumstance

stance of recreation, and yet refrains not laughing in a serious occasion, would not such a man, I say, look like an odd conceited unseasonable Person? There are gestures and countenances which will beseem such a time, and yet would very ill become another. He that falls a laughing in a serious occasion, and will not relax his mind with decent mirth when the season is proper, would not he justly be held fantastic and immodest? We must also observe the place and the persons with whom we converse, but very particularly the quality of those persons.

The second sort of the virtue of modesty is interior, and works the same effects in the soul, as this now spoken of does in the body. This keeps and maintains the powers of our soul in tranquillity, by avowing the curiosity and needless enquiries of our understanding; and retrenching the multitude of the desires of our will, by bringing them to the sole application of our thoughts and affections.

affections to that *Unum Necessarium*, that one necessary object which Mary made choice of, and which shall never be taken from her; which is an affectionate will to please God. Whereas Martha's busy spirit seems to represent to us very lively the immodesty of the will, for she runs hastily to and fro, and sets all her servants to work, nor gives herself, or them any leisure to eat; so eager she is to treat our Saviour well, that she thinks she can never provide dishes enough to make him good cheer. Just so the will which is not bridled by modesty, runs from one motive to another, to excite in herself the love of God, and employs all its care and industry, to find means to serve him; whereas there is no need of all this bustle; it being much better to keep close to our Lord as did Magdalen kneeling at his feet, and begging of him, to bestow upon us his holy love; which is a more compendious and more effectual way, than to stand thinking and studying

ing how we may acquire it. This modesty keeps the will shut up close, or retired within herself, and actually exercising the best means of advancing herself in the love of God, according to that vocation in which his providence has placed her.

I have already told you, that this virtue is chiefly employed in subduing and subjecting your understanding; because curiosity, which is so natural to us, exposes us to very many dangers, and hinders us from knowing any one thing perfectly well, and as she ought by reason we do not allow ourselves time enough to learn it, and acquaint ourselves with it thoroughly.

The bees have no abiding place where to rest while they have no king, but are continually hovering in the air, or clustering now here now there. But as soon as they have got a sovereign, they keep themselves thronged round about him. In like manner, after our souls have once chosen our Lord

for their only king and sovereign, our powers like those chaste little birds, leave their disorderly wildness, and range themselves near him, nor ever leave their well chosen station, unless it be to gather honey, by the exercises of charity towards our neighbour, which he has commanded us; which done, they presently and modestly return to their former place of repose, to manage and to amass together the honey of holy and amorous conceptions and affections, which his sacred presence gives them; by which means they avoid that unsteady inquisitiveness of the understanding, which so distracts them by their simple attention to God; and also that unactive stupidity, and uneasiness of spirit, by performing those exercises, which charity towards their neighbour puts them upon, in all due occasions.

It is moreover to be remarked, that this exterior modesty now spoken of, conduces much to gain the interior one, and to settle the  
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the tranquillity and peace of the soul. The proof of which is visible from all those holy fathers that have been professedly much addicted to prayer; for they did all of them, make account that the modest posture they used, did much avail to that end, as kneeling with their hands joined, or their arms across.

The third sort of modesty has respect to our words, and to our manner of conversing with others. There are some words which seem immodest, were they spoken in any other season except in the time of recreation in which circumstance right reason allows, that we may give a little relaxation to our spirit; and he who, at that season would neither speak himself, nor let others speak of any thing but of high and sublime subjects, would appear awkwardly immodest: in regard, modesty (as was said) regards both times, places, and persons.

For example, I read lately in St. Pachomius his life, that as soon as he had entered into the wilderness,

to live there as a hermit, he was assaulted with great temptations, and the wicked angels did often appear to him in diverse manners. The writer of his life relates, how when he went one day to cut some wood, he saw great troops of the infernal spirits come to fright him; who ranging themselves all armed in order, as soldiers do when they mount the guard, cried out to one another, make place for the holy man. Pachomius well aware that these were but tricks of the devil, fell a laughing and said, you jeer me; but yet I shall be a holy man if it pleases God. The devil, seeing he could not entrap him by serious representations, determined to try what mirthfulness would do. He tied then abundance of cords to one single leaf of a tree, and set a great multitude to pull these cords with might and main, crying out, and sweating as if the were over wrought. The Saint lifting up his eyes, and observing this ridiculous foolery of the devil, represented  
to



to himself our Saviour crucified on the tree of the cross. The devils seeing him apply his thought to the fruit of the redeeming tree, and not to his fantastic leaf, left him and went away with confusion and shame. There is a time to laugh, and a time to look soberly; as well as there is to speak, and be silent; as Elias mocked and laughed at the priests of Baal.

This sort of modesty does also frame our manner of speaking, that it may be agreeable and not offensive to our neighbour, either by being too mincingly low, or too rudely high; too drawlingly slow, or too hastily quick; but keeping a due and holy mean between those extremes: giving others also leave to finish what they are speaking of, without interrupting them (which bewrays an itch for babbling) and yet, notwithstanding, take their own turn of speaking, as occasion invites, to avoid the opinion of rusticity and ill-breeding, or of insufficiency, which renders us unfit for good conversation.

tion. Oftentimes also we meet with occasions, in which it seems in some regard needful to discourse much, and yet we must say little or nothing; because modesty, tranquillity, and patience, do require it of us that we should not affect to speak, but keep our thoughts to ourselves.

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### C H A P. XXXIII.

*The Exercise of Stripping the Soul naked from all her Affections.*

*First Point.* **C**ontinue unchangeably in this holy resolution that you ought still to keep yourself in the simple presence of God, by an entire stripping yourself of all self-love, and remitting yourself entirely into the arms of his blessed will; and, as often as you find your spirit wander from this habitation in God, reduce it calmly and sweetly to its former state; but yet without sensible acts of your understanding,

or

or your will; because this simple and sincere confidence in God, and this hearty delivering yourself over into the fatherly bosom of the divine goodness, comprizes in itself, all that can be requisite to please God.

*Second Point.* Continue thus, I say, without diverting yourself by considering what you are doing, what you shall do, or what may or will happen to you in all manner of occurrences. Do not stand speculating upon your contradictions or afflictions, but receive them all contentedly from the hand of God without exception, and this with sweetness and patience; acquiescing totally, and in every thing to his most adorable will. If you perceive any care or desire arise in your heart, cast it away as soon as it begins to appear, and replace your heart on God; protesting that you desire nothing but him, and the accomplishment of his most blessed pleasure.

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*Point third.* Keep your soul then in a holy solitude and retiredness, accompanied only with Christ crucified. Reduce yourself to the amiable pureness and nakedness of a little infant, that your most loving and kind Lord may take you in his arms, and carry you to the highest perfection of his divine love, by such ways as he sees best. Be not discouraged if he sometimes takes from you, or strips you naked even of divine consolations and perceptions of his presence; for he does it for this end, that the consideration even of his presence here should not take up your heart, but only himself and his divine pleasure.

*Fourth Point.* O how happy are they who are thus naked, for our Lord will cloath them again; how happy are they who divest themselves of an immoderate and over earnest solitude, even to acquire the love of God, and who have often in their thought these words, I came naked from the womb of my mother, and  
naked

naked -I shall return thither ! How happy was that chaste and holy Joseph, who had neither button nor loop to fasten his garment ; so that, when the Egyptian lady would have caught him by that hold, quickly disentangled himself, and escaped from her.

*Fifth Point.* Admire the -holy spouse in the Canticles, who held it a great happiness to be naked of all company, that she might be alone with her only King, and say to him, My beloved is for me, and I am for him. Consider the blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, going to Ægypt, they saw none in their journey, nor regarded any but their blessed Jesus. Consider how, in the close of the transfiguration, the disciples neither saw Moses nor Elias, but only Jesus. I admire with much content, the Saviour of our souls coming naked from the womb and the bosom of his blessed mother, and dying naked on the cross, and afterwards embraced all naked by her, and afterwards buried. I admire the  
same

same holy virgin, who, born naked  
 of her mother, and in the eye of  
 the world, deprived of the honour  
 of being a mother herself, was  
 afterwards divested of her mo-  
 therhood at the foot of the cross,  
 when he gave her to St. John for  
 his. So that she might truly say,  
 I was naked and stripped of my  
 greatest happiness, before that in-  
 stant when I conceived my son, and  
 I am now naked and divested of  
 the honour of being a mother,  
 when I receive him dead in my  
 arms. My Lord gave him to me,  
 the Lord has taken him away.  
 Blessed be the name of the Lord.  
 Live, my dear Jesus, despoiled and  
 stripped of both father and mother  
 upon the cross; live in my heart  
 his holy nakedness. I may say to  
 you, my dear sister, what was said  
 to the prophet Isaiah. Go and  
 prophesy stark naked spiritually;  
 and I may add what was said to  
 that holy queen by the royal  
 prophet. Hear, daughter, and con-  
 sider; forget the populace (or rude  
 croud) of thy affections, and the  
 house

house of thy temporal father, and the king will affectionately embrace and love this thy beautiful spiritual nakedness and simplicity.

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## C H A P. XXXIV.

*Of perfect abandoning and casting ourselves upon God.*

**T**HE exercise of casting ourselves entirely upon God, is the same as to give him absolutely our will. The practice of this virtue consists of a perfect indifference to receive all sorts of casualties, in the same order as it pleases the divine providence to send them. To do this we must obey the will of God signified to us, and submit to his good pleasure. The one is done by way of resignation, the other by the way of indifference.

This exercise of leaving ourselves in the hands of God, comprehends our abandoning ourselves to his pleasure in all temptations, dryness,



dryness, distractions, aversions, and repugnances which happen to us, in our spiritual life. For we may be sure it is God's pleasure they should happen, when they do not come through our fault, nor proceed from any sinful defect. In a word, this giving ourselves up perfectly to God's disposal, is the virtue of virtues: It is the cream or flower of charity, the odoriferous scent of humility, the true merit of patience, and the fruit of perseverance. Great then is this virtue, and only worthy to be practised by the dearest children of God. My Father, says our dying Saviour on the cross, into your hands I remit my spirit; as much as to say, if it be your will that I remain still in these torments on the cross, I am content, so your divine pleasure be done. We ought my dear daughter, do the same in all occasions whatever, whether we suffer pain or enjoy pleasure, without preventing our desire of having his will fulfilled by any particular will of our own.

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Our Lord loves most tenderly those souls, who do wholly surrender themselves to his Fatherly care, and readily follow the conduct of his divine providence; resting assured that he will certainly order what is best for them, nor suffer any thing to happen to them but what will turn to the advantage and greater profit of their soul, so we do as we ought, place our whole confidence in him. For, we can never be brought to such an extremity but we shall still be able to pour out before his divine Majesty the rich perfumes of a holy submission, and a resigned will, of a resolution to serve him and never offend. Our good Lord sometimes wills that his choice and best beloved children should follow him, with the most pointed and finest part of their spirit, without any kind of other thing to rest themselves, or rely on, but his divine will. You see here my daughter, in what path I would have you walk.

A soul.

A soul thus self abandoned, has no more to do, but to rest quiet in the arms of her Lord, as a child does in the bosom of its mother; which, when she sets him down to try and enure his feeble limbs to walk, ventures to step no farther than his mother may catch hold of him again, if he be like to fall; and when she has a mind to take him up again and carry him in her arms, he lets her do so without repugnance, nay with much content. In the same manner a soul which loves the will and good pleasure of God, does, in whatsoever happens, submit itself to be carried by him, and takes its little steps forward, relying on his ever ready support; yet carefully performing whatever it knows to be his will; and, as soon as it perceives any particular inclination of her own begin to make her leave off God's conduct, she presently mortifies it by making only the will of God live in her. There are very few who arrive at this degree of abandoning themselves perfectly; but yet

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we ought all of us pretend to it and endeavour it, every one according to his capacity.

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## C H A P. XXXV.

### *An Exercise for the Week.*

**T**O make your spiritual retreat, you may make use of these points here hinted, which regard the divine infancy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As for the week, consider him shut up in the most holy womb of his blessed mother; and admire that his immensity would, for our love, reduce itself into so narrow a compass.

On *Monday*, admire him in the crib; in extreme poverty, and desire to imitate him.

On *Tuesday*, consider how the angels and the shepherds adore him; and joining your devotions with them, offer him your most prostrate adorations.

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On *Wednesday*, consider how early he began to suffer for us, by shedding his precious blood at his circumcision: and beg of him that he would retrench and cut off all superfluities from your soul.

On *Thursday*, employ yourself in meditating on the mysterious offerings, that the three kings presented to him: make an offering to him of your whole heart, and adore him with them.

On *Friday*, contemplate him in the temple in the arms of his blessed mother; and consecrate your heart to him, and beg of him to purify it, and accept it for his habitation.

On *Saturday*, meditate on his flight into Egypt: implore his heavenly grace that you may fly from all sin, and from all things that are any ways disagreeable to his divine purity.

## C H A P. XXXVI.

*An Exercise upon the Passion of our Lord.*

**F**OR the week; consider him as washing the feet of his beloved disciples. Beg of him to wash and purify your heart from all filth of sin.

On *Monday*, consider him as in the garden of Olivet, begging of his heavenly Father with tears that the cup of his bitter passion may, if possible, be excused; and yet perfectly resigning himself to suffer it if it were his pleasure. Intreat him humbly to bestow on you the gift of prayer in all your greatest troubles and derelictions.

On *Tuesday*, meditate with what sweetness and meekness he received the kiss of the traitor Judas. Beseech him to grant you charity and sweetness towards your enemies.

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On *Wednesday*, consider him as apprehended and bound by the Jews. Ask of him patience in all your tribulations.

On *Thursday*, admire how the king of heaven and earth suffers himself without the least resistance, to be cloathed in a fool's habit at Herod's house. Beg of him humility and contempt of yourself.

On *Friday*, consider how willingly and courageously, he bears the heavy burthen of the cross upon his wounded shoulders to mount Calvary. Make many fervent acts of compassion for his unspeakable pains and grief.

On *Saturday*, lift up your eyes, behold him lie stretched out at his full length, nailed to the cross, and raised upon it in the air. Lend an attentive ear to all his sweet words. Pray to him that you may live and die in his holy fear and love, who died so lovingly for you.



## C H A P. XXXVII.

*Of the Esteem which ought to be made of our Rules, and that they ought to be observed out of Love.*

**I**F you would live happily and with perfection, you must accustom yourself to live according to reason, your rules and obedience; and not according to your inclinations and aversions; nay you ought to bear a great honour for all things that belong to your religious state; for if you slight one of them to day, and another to morrow, the tie and obligation you have to observe them being broke, all will fall to the ground.

The rules and observance of religion, are that gradual ladder of Jacob, by which holding fast all the way to the virtue of charity, you may by a religious life, mount up to heaven and descend down again to yourselves by humility.

For though they do not oblige under sin as they are rules, yet how seldom soever you transgress them, still you will neglect a proper means to advance you in virtue. And if we are to render an account of every idle word, how much more of every idle and unprofitable neglect of that fruit, which the exercise of the rules, to which we are obliged, brings to our souls.

According to the measure, that divine love makes progress in a religious soul; so much she will be more exact and careful to observe all the constitutions of her order, though they do not oblige her under sin. For love, as the scripture tells us, is as prevalent a motive as death; and therefore it will be as strongly attractive to make us keep our good resolutions, as if death had been threatened us if we break them.

Zeal (as the holy canticle tells us) is as hard, firm, or inflexible as hell; whence those souls which have true zeal to arrive at perfection,

fection, will through the virtue of that immoveable disposition, do as much or more, as they would do for fear of hell itself. The sweet violence of heavenly love, is far more agreeable to our nature than the fear of eternal damnation; because to act out of inclination is more natural to us, than to act out of constraint.

‘He that keeps the commandment (says Solomon) preserves his soul, and he that neglects his way, procures his own death.’ Your way, my daughter, is this sort of life in which God has put you. I do not speak here of your vows, because it is most evident that whoever does transgress his essential obligation and his vows, is questionless guilty of a heinous mortal sin.

CHAP.

## C H A P. XXXVIII:

*Of the Difficulties which occur in  
your spiritual Conduct.*

**A**S for what concerns your conduct or manner of governing others, do not complain of the loss of your spiritual conveniences, and of the particular contentment of your inclinations, which you undergo by cultivating these dear souls which are committed to your charge: for God will abundantly requite it in the day of your spiritual nuptials. The brides in antient times wore no crowns, or chaplets of flowers on their marriage day, but those which themselves had gathered, and tied up together in a decent order. Those little souls you govern, are your flowers; and if you order them right, you will wear them for your crown at that solemn festival. Beg of our Lord  
that

that, to this end, he would give you the spirit of sweetness and simplicity, the spirit of love and humility, the spirit of gentleness and purity, the spirit of cheerfulness and mortification; all these are requisite accomplishments for a good superior. For the spirit of him whose place they bear, is generous, sweet, and humble.

You know, my dear daughter, that the fire which Moses saw on the mountain, represented to us, the nature of holy love; and as those flames were nourished by the fuel of the thorns, so the exercises of sacred charity, are far better maintained amongst tribulations, than in the midst of contentments. Take courage then, my daughter, let us walk forwards indefatigably in these low and intricate paths. Let us all our life long, carry the cross in our arms, with humility and patience. It is all one to us whether God speaks to us from the midst of flowers or thorns. But, indeed, I do not find that he ever spoke to us from the  
midst

midst of flowers, but very often that he vouchsafes to do this from among brambles, and in the desert. Let us then, my dear daughter, walk on chearfully, though in bad weather and the dark night. This is the only proper way to imitate your heavenly spouse, who did never find his beloved lolling in her bed. Lift your eyes to heaven and you will find never a mortal there, now made immortal, but such who arrived there through continual troubles and afflictions. This is the road-way to heaven; I see my harbour and am well assured that the rudest tempests can never make me miscarry in my voyage, if I steer my course by God's holy will.

In admonishing others, use love and sweetness: It is this that makes reprehensions more effectual, and without this it does mischief by damping those poor souls that are weak.

Oh! how happy will it be for you to walk still in the low path of humility, and this with a great courage,

rage, and that courage placed in God! Live among your dear children with a holy joy: show and offer to them your spiritual teat with affection, with kind looks and a gracious demeanour, to invite them to suck thence the nourishment of purest virtue, with gladness and chearfulness. I do not bid you be fawning, cajoling, or over jocund with them. But I exhort you to be sweet, kind, loving and affable. In a word, frame your comportment to a cordial and motherly love; be a kind of pastoral nurse to your daughters, and you will do all that is requisite: you will by this become all to all; a mother to all, and a succour and help to all. This is that only comportment which suffices, and without which all other things are deficient.



## C H A P. XXXIX.

*Of the Means how to fix your Spirit in God, that nothing can divert it from him.*

**Y**OU will ask me, my dear daughter, by what way you may so rivet your affections and spirit to God, that nothing can detach you from him. I answer; two things are necessary to do this; to die and to be saved; for after this there can be no separation: You will say, this does not answer your question, your enquiry being what you are to do, to hinder that the least trifle do not draw back your spirit from God here, as you find it does; waving the least distraction. Pardon me, my dear daughter, it is not any little distraction which at all separates your spirit from God, nor any other thing whatever, whether you fancy it great or little, but only sin.

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I have often times observed that many weak uninstructed souls, made no difference between God, and the sentiment or perception they have of God; between faith and the sentiment they have of faith; which is a very great error. It seems to them, that when they have no actual perception of God, they leave off to be in his presence, which is a gross piece of ignorance. A person who is going to suffer martyrdom for God's sake, perhaps has no sentiment of God, but only of the pain he feels all the while he is suffering; yet still he ceases not to merit all that time, in virtue of his first resolution, and exercises an act of the greatest charity. There is, I say, great difference between having the presence of God, (I mean the being spiritually in his presence) and to have a perception of his presence. It is only God who can do us this latter favour, for to prescribe you methods how to acquire this perception is altogether impossible.

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Do you ask how you are to preserve continually a great reverence towards God, as being altogether unworthy of so high a favour? I answer, there is no other means to obtain this grace, but to consider well that he is our God, and we his poor weak creatures, and utterly unworthy of this honour. This was the way St. Francis took, who continued a whole night asking God in these words; 'Who are you O Lord, and who am I?' And if you importune me to know what you must do to acquire the love of God; I answer, it is by having a will to love him. Instead of studying and putting interrogatories what you are to do, endeavour to keep your spirit united to God, put in practice a continual application of your mind to him, and I do assure you, you will gain your pretensions far sooner, than by any other way you can invent; for by distracting and dissipating your spirit into many thoughts, you become less recollected, and thence less

less capable of joining and uniting your mind with the divine majesty, who requires of us our whole heart without reserve. There are some souls; who employ themselves so solicitously in thinking what they shall do, that they have no leisure to do any thing at all; and yet, as, for what concerns our perfection which consists in the union of our soul with the divine goodness, the question is, not how little we know, but how much we do.

The best answer those who are asked how they must go to Heaven can give, is to answer that they must still take one step and then another, or set one foot before the other, and that by this means they will certainly come thither. Go still forwards if you desire to arrive at perfection. Walk on in the plain road of your vocation with simplicity, bending your endeavours rather to do, than to think, and this is the shortest way you can take. But give me leave without offence to discover to you a subtilty,

subtilty, of which perhaps you are not aware; you would have me teach you a way of perfection made up to your hand, so that there is no more to do, but to clap it over you as you do your gown: which done, you might find yourself perfect without any more trouble; that is, you would have me give you such a perfection which costs you no pains in gaining it, and not such a one as needs your labour in working it out, because this taking of pains is disagreeable to your nature.

You seem to have taken a conceit that perfection is a kind of art, which is learned by a trick; so that if one could but find out the secret of it, he would immediately become master of it without any more trouble. Alas! we deceive ourselves: There is no other, nor greater secret but to labour faithfully, in the exercise of divine love, if we would arrive at an union with our best beloved. But when I say you must work, act, and labour: I would be understood to

to mean you must do this, or work, with the superior part of your soul; for, as for the repugnances you find in the inferior you ought no more to wonder at them or regard them, than passengers do at dogs that bark at them at a distance.

Let us now proceed to the other demand of yours, which is, what you must do to strengthen your resolutions, so that they may be brought to effect: The best way is to endeavour to put them in practise. You desire to amend and perfect yourself, and when the occasion to do so is presented, you despond and fall flat on the ground. Would you know how it comes that we remain so weak? It is because we will still be tasting unwholesome food. For example, we desire to love correction, and yet we retain a great desire to be esteemed: what a folly, what an impossibility is this! How can you ever have strength to bear correction, while you feed on the windy meat of self-esteem? Take  
another

another instance. I desire to keep my soul recollected, and yet I am not willing to retrench and cut off multitudes of unprofitable thoughts and reflections. This is equally impossible. Again, I would gladly be firm and unalterable in my holy exercises; and yet I am loath to take pains in performing them. In a word, I have a mind to find all my work done to my hand, which cannot be in this life; for we must always labour, or we can never be perfect. The feast of this purification does not only last till its octave, (of which it has none) but must be perpetually continued. We must equally resolve on two things; one is to see that the weeds of bad inclinations grow not in our garden; the other to have the courage to pluck them up and to root them out; nay, to endeavour to root out even ourselves, I mean our selfishness, from our own heart. For self-love never dies totally, while we live here; and it is this proper love and esteem



steem which produces and gives growth to all these weeds.

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## CHAP. XL.

*How to keep our Resolutions firm and unshaken amidst the diverse Accidents of this World..*

**W**HEN God laid, " Let us make man according to our own image and likeness," he immediately gave him reason and the use of it, to distinguish good from evil, and to discern what things are fit to be chosen, what to be eschewed. It is this reason which teaches us that we ought to consider the divers dispositions of divine providence, to make our best advantage of them, and still to conform ourselves to them, and govern ourselves accordingly, in the various circumstances of our spiritual life, in which firmness and constancy are absolutely necessary. It is a great abuse of our reason, to be unwilling to suffer, or feel temptations

ations and changes in our humours, while we do not govern ourselves by reason, nor will let it govern us. God has indeed given us reason for our guide, yet how few are there that will follow its instructions, but on the contrary follow the conduct of their passions? Hence it comes that they are so fickle, inconstant, and changeable in their humours. If they have a passion, or appetite to go to bed, too early or too late, they comply with its suggestion: If to do, or not to do this thing or that, they yield readily to it, and so in the rest. It is this which makes them behave themselves as fops, or changelings, not only in their affections, but also in their conversation. They make account all men must accommodate themselves to what they like, and yet think they are not to frame themselves to the desires of others. They suffer themselves to be carried, or rather hurried, by their inclinations and particular affections, perverting thus the order God has established

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in the world, which is, that we should all of us be subject to reason.

If reason does not maintain its ascendent over us, over all our powers and faculties, over all our passions, humours, and inclinations, and, in a word, over all we have or are, we shall be tost in a continual vicissitude, change and inconstancy; we shall be now sad, now jocund; to day fervent, to morrow sloathfull; we shall be calm and composed for an hour, and afterwards for two days forward and disquiet; in a word, our whole life will be spent in idleness and loss of time. We ought therefore to make it our continual endeavour to follow the conduct of reason, least meeting with such unforeseen encounters are apt to fret and vex our spirit, we fall into troubles and disturbances. Let us preserve our interior peace in an even tenor amidst all the uneven contingencies that may happen; steering our thoughts and actions still by the compass of reason, which God has put

put in us, and remaining firm, constant and unchangeable in our resolutions, to serve him faithfully, steadily, and fervently; and to preserve us from all discontinuance of serving him as we ought, I must repeat it over and over again, and if need be, inculcate it a thousand times, that we ought to bend our most especial endeavours, that the inequality of accidents that occurs, do not transport us into an inequality of humour; which always springs from our passions, and our unmortified inclinations and affections, over which our reason ought to maintain her sovereignty. Let us consider how St. Joseph behaved himself when he saw the Blessed Virgin with-child, and was unacquainted with the mystery. He suffered the inward trouble of mind it gave him, without letting it break out in his exterior carriage. He neither complained nor lamented; he used no bitterness nor churlishness in his conversation; nor cast so much as an ill look at his blessed spouse, much less treated

treated her ill; which any man, but one so holy and just as he was, would have thought he might in right do; perhaps that he ought to do it in duty.

But you will say, my aversion towards such a person is so extreme, that I can scarce endure to speak to her; such an action is so displeasing to me, I can never be able to suffer it. But you must not, for all this dislike, enter into any contest with that person as cholerick people use; but suffer and bear with her charitably, as St. Joseph did with our Lady. Continue peaceable and quiet, notwithstanding your trouble and repugnance, and leave the care to God's providence, to free you from that vexation when he shall see fit.

What you are only to heed is your own perfection; nor yet ought you have a too solicitous care even of that, but leave it entirely to God. You are only to have such a care of perfecting your soul, as God wills you should have; what

what God wills is, that we should use a calm and peaceable endeavour, or such a one as is judged proper for us by those under whose conduct he has placed us. For the rest, we are to leave it to his fatherly care, endeavouring as much as possible, to keep our souls in peace. For the temple of Solomon, which he chose for his habitation, was made or built in peace, that is by a peaceable king, and without noise; nor is any but a peaceable and quiet heart, a fit dwelling place for the Holy Ghost.

Let us then employ all our care, that nothing, I say nothing at all, does trouble and disquiet us. If we be put into an office which is disgustful to us, let us not fail to complain, or say, if they put this charge upon me I shall fall into a thousand sallies of impatience and violent hurry; or, I am already too much subject to distractions, and this will make me distracted ten times more. Had they confined me to my cell, I could have remained quiet, moderate and recollected;

collected; but now leave such complaints, I say, and go on in a holy simplicity whither your obedience leads you. It is God that puts you there; do not desert the station in which he has placed you, he will uphold and strengthen you to maintain your post. On the contrary, if you will needs stay where your own inclination detains you, your proper will will make you die there. Embrace what obedience puts upon you, without making excuses: God is on your side while you do so, and will make you advance more in perfection among the fatiguing troubles you undergo, than if you had your own humour to sit still, and do nothing.

CHAP.



## C H A P. XLI.

*Of renouncing our propriety to any thing, and stripping ourselves naked of all things.*

**T**HIS totally divesting ourselves here spoken of, is made by three degrees. The first is, the having an affection for it, because of its beauty and excellence. The second is; the resolution which follows this affection; for we are easily won to embrace a good, after we have once imbibed an affection for it. The third is, the practice of it, which is the hardest of the three.

It is true, my dear sister, that none can possibly arrive at perfection as long as they retain an affection for any imperfection, how little soever it be, even though it be no more but an idle and unprofitable thought: you cannot imagine what mischief such a trifle (as the world thinks it) brings to soul; you must therefore cut

short, and utterly reject it as soon  
 as ever you perceive it. Examine  
 then your conscience seriously whe-  
 ther your affection is engaged in  
 any such affection: for example,  
 whether you affect to speak some  
 word to gain praise or applause.  
 If you find you have; then, it is out  
 of doubt you have an affection for  
 vanity. You will easily discover  
 whether you have or no, or whe-  
 ther you be attached to such a vani-  
 ty, by reflecting on yourself when  
 you have no opportunity of doing  
 what you had proposed to yourself;  
 or, if you have no affection for it,  
 you will have no disquiet, or regret  
 to have omitted it; on the other  
 side, if you find some trouble, or  
 regret that you missed the occasion  
 of pursuing that vain end, then you  
 certainly affect it. Now our affec-  
 tions are so precious (in regard  
 they ought to be wholly em-  
 ployed upon God) that we must  
 take great heed not to spend or la-  
 sh them upon unprofitable objects;  
 and one fault (though it be a very  
 little one) done out of affection,

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is more contrary to perfection, than a hundred others done out of surprize, or in such a manner as that the affection was not engaged in it.

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## C H A P. XLII.

*Of the three Rules borrowed from the Doves, and applied to Religious Souls.*

**I**T is no wonder the holy spouse in the Canticles compares his beloved to a dove; for a soul truly enamoured of God ought to have all the dove-like properties and qualifications, which are these.

The first is, that the dove does all her chief actions for the common good of the dove-house. You may observe that the dove, while she is hatching her eggs, never stirs off them; she never rambles a foraging for her food; Oh, how agreeable and profitable a rule is this to do nothing but for God and to leave to him the care

of our particular! How happy and  
 safe a condition is it I say, to do  
 nothing but for God, and to  
 know that he is solicitous for you,  
 and will order all things for your  
 good; especially, as to those spiri-  
 tual concerns, which advance your  
 soul to perfection! How blessed  
 should we be, if we made our dear  
 Jesus the last end and aim of all  
 our actions, which obliges his in-  
 finite goodness to a reciprocal love  
 of us, and a care of our eternal  
 welfare! According to the mea-  
 sure of the confidence we place in  
 him, he will proportionably extend  
 his providential care over us, which  
 can never fail those that trust in  
 him. His goodness is infinite to-  
 wards a soul that trusts in him.  
 She will enjoy a tranquillity and  
 peace, beyond what all this world  
 can give her; and a repose which  
 is the same with his own, which  
 he communicates to the blessed  
 in heaven, where she will be cer-  
 ain to enjoy eternally, and fully  
 the chaste embraces of her heavenly  
 spouse.

Dwell then secure in this holy repose. What a pity is it to see great numbers of souls, who pretend to perfection, wearing out themselves in restless inquiries. They imagine that all consists in making a multitude of acts of desires. They vex and hurry themselves in seeking out; now this means, then straight another, to arrive at their end. In the meantime they are never content, never at quiet within themselves. They think they never can find persons enough to ask their advice, how they may find proper and (the old not succeeding) new means to compass what they are in quest of: in a word, they so amuse themselves continually with talking of perfection, that they forget to practise the principle means of all which is to retire themselves in this calm tranquillity of spirit, and to cast all their care, and confidence on him, who only can give increase to what himself has planted. All our good depends entirely on the grace of God; which

our only help and support. One good work done well with tranquillity of mind, is far more worth than multitudes performed in hurry and disquiet.

The soul which is truly dove-like, that is, which loves God dearly, applies herself simply and calmly to use the means prescribed her, without hankering or searching after others, though they seem never so perfect. Consider, I beseech you, the life of some of the great saints and masters of spirituality. By what means came St. Anthony so much honoured by God and men for his extraordinary sanctity to such perfection and holiness? Was it by virtue of his reading; was it by spiritual conferences, frequent communion, or by the multitude of the sermons preached? Not at all; but by following the example of the religious that went before him. Did Paul the hermit gain his sanctity by the reading of good books? Alas! he had none to read. Did he get it then by frequent com-

communions or confessions? He never did this more than twice in his whole life. Was it then by conferences or preaching? No, he did no such thing, nor saw so much, as one man in the desert where he lived, but only St. Anthony who went to visit him when he was near his death. Know then how he came to be such a saint; only by the fidelity and constancy he used in applying himself to what he had undertaken at the beginning, and to that to which he was called, and not amusing himself with any other thing.

Those great religious saints, who lived under the conduct of St. Pachomius, had they any books or did they use preaching? Not in the least. Had they any conferences? Not at all. Did they go often to confession? Only at great festivals. Did they hear multitudes of masses? Only on Sundays and holy-days and never else. But you will ask, how came it then that having so few assistances in comparison of what we have, they arrived



He arrived to such a high pitch of perfection, and that we, having so many, do thus fall short of their sanctity, and have so little courage to serve God, unless supported by spiritual consolations? I answer, this happens thro' our inconstancy, and the want of that solidity and firmness, of which they were masters. Let us then imitate these holy religious, by applying ourselves to our proper business, that is, to what God requires of us in order to our vocation and duty: by performing it humbly, and constantly, and by minding nothing else; esteeming no other means more effectual to bring us to perfection, than what the rules of our state prescribe.

The second property of the dove is, that she says in her language, 'The more they take from me, the more I work.' That is, as soon as the master of the dove-house takes from her, her little ones when they grow big, she presently sets herself to hatch others. To understand this better, reflect on the example of

of Job, who had the honour to be praised by God's own mouth. He never suffered himself to be overcome by any affliction that happened to him, but the more God took from him, the more he did; and was still more devout. And what duty did he not do in his prosperity? Read his history, and you will find he neglected nothing that became a pious person.

Reflect how, when afterwards he was reduced to the extremity of misery, he never complained of his good God, he never yielded to any impatience, but said with the dove, 'The more God takes from me, the more I will endeavour to do:' and how would he do it? Not by giving alms, for he had nothing to give, but by this sole act of submission and patience, which he made when he saw himself bereft of all kind of comfort; he did more by this act alone, than he had done in the whole time of his prosperity, by all the great charities he had bestowed; and he rendered himself more pleasing to God by this one act of conformity,

formity, patience, and resignation, than by all the good works he had done in his whole life; because there needed a more strong and vigorous love of God to make this one act, than there needed to do all the others.

The same must we do to observe this excellent rule and property of the dove. We must suffer ourselves to be bereaved by the owner of the dove-house, of our little ones, that is, of the means to execute our desires when ever he pleases to take them from us (how good soever they be) without complaining, or resenting that we are injuriously, or hardly dealt with: But instead of this, we must apply ourselves to double our diligence, and put in practice more carefully, not our inclinations, or our exercises themselves, but the perfection with which we do them; endeavouring to gain more by this one act (as most certainly we shall) than we could ever do by a hundred of others, which our particular affection or propension

puts us upon performing. Once more I assure you, that one only act done in dryness of spirit, is more worth, than many others done, when you have tender and gustful devotion.

The third property of the dove is, that she laments in the same manner of expression as she uses when she rejoices. She utters still the same tone and the same air, both for her song of jubilee, and for groans of grief, or when she would complain and manifest her sorrow.

It is this holy evenness of spirit, my dear daughter, which I earnestly recommend to you. I do not speak here of equality of humour, or inclination in your common deameanour, but of equality, or evenness of spirit. I would not have you regard, or make much account of those trifles, that the inferior part of your soul makes, which is that which gives you such frequent disquiets; what I desire is that you should always continue firm, and keep up a constant resolution, in the superior part of  
your

your spirit to follow those virtues of which you make profession, and to be still the same in adversity as in prosperity. In this point, the example of the same holy Job, will do us good service. For he still continues the same strain, nor will you find any words in his history that refer to God, which are not all of a piece. The name of the Lord be praised, was the canticle of love, which he sung all along; the Lord has given, the Lord has taken away, be his holy name ever blessed. Oh, how chaste and amorous a dove was his holy soul! Do you the same my dear daughter, and you will live with such a peace as no events can change or violate, nor all the contrarieties and oppositions, that daily assault you, disturb.

You see then the three rules, or properties of a dove, all which proceed from, and oblige through love; and therefore the love of our dear Lord should win us to observe them, that so we may say with the beautiful dove, the spouse in the Canticles,

ticles, my well beloved is mine, and I am wholly his; nor will I do any thing but to please him; his heart is always fixed upon me by his careful providence, and mine is fixed upon him by my assured and loving trust and confidence.

Having done all you can for your dearest and best beloved Lord in this life, he will carry you with him into his glory, where you will experience the happiness of those, who forsaking all superfluous care and inquietnets, (which generally we have for ourselves and our own perfection) are intent, and attentively fixed to see that blessed object, his whole soul-ravishing essence at one simple view; abandoning themselves without any reserve into the arms of that divine and infinite goodness for which they laboured here. Again, the happiness of those, who have observed the second of those properties or rules, will be inestimable: for resigning and giving up themselves wholly to be bereaved, and stripped of all by their heavenly master

ter and conductor, and continuing to say, "The more he takes from me, the more I will do," and remaining in all things subject to his divine pleasure, they will sing for ever, songs of jubilee and exaltation in those heavenly mansions; which will, I hope, encourage you to preserve carefully this amiable, and continual equality, and quiet composition of your spirit.

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### C H A P. XLIII.

*How you ought to receive the holy Sacraments.*

**T**H E sacraments are the channels and vehicles by which God descends to us, as prayer is the passage, or way by which we ascend to God.

The sacraments are in themselves divers, though the end and aim of them all is one and the same, viz. To unite us to God. We will treat at present of two of them only, that is of penitence and of the holy Euchrist.

And



And in the first place, it is most necessary to let you know the reason why, tho' we receive these two sacraments so often, we receive not also those graces which they are ordained, and wont to bring to those souls that are well prepared, since those graces are joined to those sacraments, as effects are with their proper causes. I will tell you in one word, it is for want of due preparation: whence it is my duty to instruct how, to prepare yourself to receive them.

The first preparation then is purity of intention; the second is attention, and the third is humility.

As for purity of intention, it is a disposition altogether necessary, not only for the receiving the sacraments, but also for every action we perform thro' our whole lives. Now our intention is pure, when we come to the sacraments or do any other thing, whatever it be, that we may better unite our wills to God, or be more acceptable and more beloved by him, without the mixture of any other interest. You will easily discover whither

whither you aim at these best ends or no by this; that if you desire to receive, and are not permitted to do it; or if, after receiving you find no spiritual comfort in your soul, and yet, notwithstanding those difficulties you still remain in peace, without consenting to the assaults which the enemy makes in such occasions; then your intention was pure; but if, on the contrary, you give way and consent to, or deliberately entertain such suggestions as make your spirit disturbed and disquiet because they refuse to let you receive, or because you find not this inward consolation; then it is evident your intention was not pure; and that you did not aim by that action to unite your heart to God, but to those consolations; since you might have had a hearty union with God, without them, by means of holy obedience. In like manner, if you desire perfection with such a wish, as fills your mind full of disquiet, it is a manifest sign that it springs from self-love, which makes you afraid others should observe any  
 imperfection

imperfection in you. If it were possible that we could be as pleasing to God remaining imperfect, as if we were perfect; we in that case ought to desire to please him without affecting to be perfect, that we might by this means nourish in our souls the virtue of holy humility.

The second preparation is attention. In every ordinary action we do, we ought to have our mind applied to it; much more must such holy and solemn things, instituted by Christ himself, require it of us. For example, going to confession, we ought to bring thither a heart lovingly sorrowful; and coming to communion, a heart ardently loving. I do not mean, while I recommend to you this great attention, that you must have no distractions; for this is not in our power. I only intend that you ought to have a very particular care not to give way to them, or continue them voluntarily.

The third preparation is humility; a virtue certainly most necessary to derive to our souls those heavenly graces, which flow thro' those sacred

cred channels ; for all waters use to run more swiftly and strongly, when the conduct pipes are placed near their source, and when they bend their course downwards.

But, besides these preparations, I have yet one word more to say to you, which is, that the principal preparation of all, is the casting ourselves totally without any reserve, upon the mercy of God ; submitting our whole will, and all our affections to his absolute rule and government. I say, without any reserve ; for such is our misery and wretchedness, that we are apt still to reserve sily to our proper will some darling concern or other. Even the most spiritual persons do ordinarily reserve to themselves a desire for high virtues. Alas ! to reserve or accept any will of our own, is not the way to compass this union, though those desires have never so fair and glorious an appearance. Seeing our Lord gives his whole self to us, he requires of us this reciprocal correspondence, that we should unite our wills entirely with him, that so it may become consummate

consummate and perfect, and make us able to say with that great pattern of christian perfection, St. Paul, I do not live myself, but rather it is Jesus Christ who lives in me.

The other part of this preparation consists in emptying your heart of all created objects, that our Lord may fill them with himself. Certainly the reason why we do not always receive the grace of sanctification (since communicating only once as we ought, is capable and sufficient to make us holy and perfect) proceeds meerly from this, that we do not let our Lord reign so entirely in us, as his goodness requires we should. This best beloved of our souls comes to visit us, and finds our heart full of desires, by affections and petty self-wills: this is not that for which he comes to look; he would find them empty of all creatures that he may render himself entire master and governor of them; to shew how much he desires to be so, his loving language to his sacred spouse is, that he wears her like a signet upon his heart, to the end that nothing may enter there but by his permission.

Perhaps you would know whether you have profited or no, by coming to these sacraments: this is best gathered by considering, whether you have advanced or no, in those virtues, which are proper for those holy duties, viz. whether or no you have got by confession a greater love, of your own abjection and of humility: for these are the virtues which particularly belong to that sacrament, and the greater degrees of humility are the proper standard, by which we are to rate the measure of our advancement. You have often heard our Saviour's words: "He that humbles himself shall be exalted:" Now to be exalted is to have advanced or increased in virtue. If, by receiving the holy communion, you become more sweet humoured and charitable, (this being the proper virtue of this sacrament, which is all sweetness and the honey of love) then you may be assured you have the fruit and benefit of it to your soul's advantage. But if, on the contrary, you do not become more charitable and sweet natured by

by receiving it, then it is but just to take from you this bread of life, since it so little nourishes you, and does not make you thrive in that virtue, for which it was particularly ordained. You will ask how you may be able to make an act of contrition in a short time. I answer, there scarce needs any time at all to make it seeing you have no more to do, but to prostrate yourself before God, in the spirit of humility, and with hearty repentance, that you have ever offended him.

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## C H A P. XLIV.

### *Of Saying the Divine Office.*

**Y**OU request I would give you some instructions how to say the divine office, I am very willing to comply with your desire. I tell you then first, that you must make your preparation to say it from the very instant you hear the bell that calls you to that duty. For in all our exercises whatever, we must bring along with us that spirit that

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is proper to perform it. It would look very odd to go to your office, in the same manner as you go to your recreation: you must carry to your recreation a spirit of joy, sweetened with love; but to your office, a spirit full of love only.

When you say, O God intend unto my aid, make account that our Lord does say to you on his side: And be thou attentive unto me.

Let those who understand something of the office, employ faithfully that talent according to the good pleasure of God, who gave it them, to help to keep them recollected, by means of the good affections they may draw thence; and let those who understand nothing of it, keep themselves simply attentive to God there present; or let them continue making loving ejaculations to him, while the other choir says the versicle, and those on their side do pause.

I would not have them out of scruple repeat their office for their having been distracted in saying it, provided they were not distracted voluntarily;

voluntarily; and though you should find yourself at the end of some Psalm, without being well assured whether you have said it or no, because your distraction hindered you from reflecting on it, do not scruple to go forwards; only humble yourself before God for your inconsiderateness: for you must not think that you were therefore negligent, because your distraction continued some long time; since it is impossible it may endure all the time of your office, and yet you may not be at all in fault; nay though you had ill thoughts in the time of your distraction, do not disquiet yourself at all, only make from time to time simple reflections towards God. I would not have any trouble themselves, that they have such involuntary thoughts; but rather, I advise them to endeavour courageously never to yield their consent to them; for there is a great difference between feeling and consenting.

## C H A P. XLV.

*Of Prayer.*

**T**HERE are many who are in a great error, in apprehending that there needs certain kinds of methods to pray as they ought, and therefore they strain themselves to find out a certain art of praying aright; in which they conceit it necessary they should be instructed. Hereupon they set themselves to speculate accutely upon all the punctilios belonging to prayer that they may know whether they prayed right or no, or how they may make it agreeable to their fancies; imagining that they may scarce cough, or stir while they are at it, for fear they should chase away the spirit of God by such motions; which is an enormous folly. As if the spirit of God were so delicate and nice, that it depended on their method or countenance. I do not say here, that they ought to avail themselves of those methods which are ordinary and marked out for them

them to use; but I say they ought not to tie themselves up to them, as those do (for example) who think they have never prayed well, if they do not premise studied considerations before the good affections, which our Lord gives them; whereas affections are the end, which those considerations aim at. Such persons resemble those travellers, who finding themselves at the place where they designed to go, return back again because they did not come thither by the way, which others shew them.

Nevertheless, it is very requisite that you should preserve a high reverence all the while you speak to the divine majesty; since the angels which are so pure do tremble in his presence. But some will say, alas! for me, I cannot always know this sense of the presence of God, which keeps the soul so humble while she is praying; or that sensible reverence, which may make me annihilate myself so heartily before God. Nor is it such a sensible reverence I am speaking of but

of that which the superior part of your soul makes, which is not at all sensible, and which keeps the highest point of your mind humble and low, as nothing before God, by knowing and acknowledging his infinite greatness, and your own beggarly nothingness and unworthiness.

The best and most assured way of meditating, is, not to frame any fancies or imaginations, but to keep those purely, and simply to the literal sense of the gospel, and of the mysteries of our faith; entertaining yourself familiarly and plainly with our Lord, as to what he has done and suffered for you without any studied representation. Now this manner of meditating, is much more elevated and excellent than the former; and therefore, as it is more holy and more solid, so you ought to employ yourself in it, though it seem not so pleasant and easy: still taking heed in every degree of prayer, to keep your spirit in a holy liberty to follow the lights and interior motions, which it shall please God to give you. But as for

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following other manners of prayer, which are yet more sublime (unless God absolutely bestows them on you) I intreat you not to meddle with them on your own head, or without the advice of your spiritual conductor.

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## C H A P. XLVI.

### *Of Religious Perfection.*

**T**HE only pretence we have to be religious, my dear daughter, ought to be to unite ourselves to God, as Jesus Christ was united with his heavenly Father, when he was dying on the cross. God has chosen you to be his spouse; it concerns you then to know how, and in what sense you are so, or (which is the same) what it is to be religious. It is to be engaged to God, by a continual mortification of yourself; and not to live but for God. Our hearts therefore must always be serving his divine Majesty; our eyes, our hands, our tongue, and all our faculties, must be wholly consecrated to the service of the same divine Master.

Hence:

Hence it is, that religion furnishes you with the most proper means imaginable for such a performance, viz. Prayers, lectures, silence, recollection of our heart, and withdrawing it from other objects that you may repose in God, and in nothing but only in him; as also with frequent ejaculations of your spirit towards him. And because we cannot arrive to this pitch, but by a continual practice of mortification of all our passions, inclinations, humours and aversions, we stand obliged to set a strict centinel over ourselves to make all these obstacles to perfection die in us. Consider, my daughter, that if a grain of wheat, falling upon the ground does not die, it remains alone; but, if it dies, it will produce a hundred fold. These words of our Saviour are very clear, being pronounced by his own divine mouth. But you will tell me this is not that which I expected when I became religious: I made account, that to be religious it sufficed, to have a desire to say my prayers and read good books; I hoped I should



have visions and revelations, see angels in the shape of men, have raptures and extacies. It seemed to me that I was so virtuous, so mortified and so humble, that every one admired me. Was it not humility enough to speak kindly to my companions, and to talk of matters of devotion; to rehearse among ourselves, what I had heard in sermons; to carry myself sweetly towards those of the house, at least when they did not contradict me? And indeed my dear daughter, this might do well enough for the world, but religion obliges you to do such works as are worthy your vocation; that is to die to yourself in every thing; as much in those which are agreeable to you, as in those which are disagreeable, bad and unprofitable.

Do you imagine, that those religious in the desert, who arrived at so close an union with God, did raise themselves to that perfect state, by following their own inclinations? You are mistaken; they mortified themselves, even in things which were of their own nature most holy;

ly; and tho' they were much delighted in singing divine hymns, in reading, praying, and such other good actions, yet they did them not to give themselves content; but on the contrary, they often deprived themselves of those pleasures, to apply themselves to works which were painful and laborious. It is true indeed that souls truly religious, do receive a thousand sweet contents amongst the mortifications and exercises of their holy religion; for it is principally to those, that the Holy Ghost imparts his extraordinary gifts, because they seek nothing but God, and the mortification of their humours, passions, and inclinations. But if they look after, or expect any thing else they will fall short of their account, and never obtain those consolations they pretend to. Wherefore religious persons ought to assume an invincible courage, otherwise they will be sure to find some by-end of their own to pursue, and to retrench the performing their duties.

The proper work of religious, is to cultivate and purify their spirit, to

root out all those ill effects, which our corrupt nature makes sprout out in our actions. So that we seem still to have something to amend, or do over again better; nor must the labourer be troubled at his ill success; for he is not to be blamed that the crop is deficient, so he has taken care to cultivate the ground, and sow his seed in it seasonably as he ought. In like manner a religious soul must not pine and be disheartened, if she does not quickly gather the ripe fruit of perfection and virtue; provided she takes a prudent and diligent care to cultivate her heart, by lopping of thence, what she perceives contrary to that perfection which she is obliged to pretend to; for we are to expect we can never be perfectly cured of all the infirmities of our soul, till we come to heaven. When the hour comes assigned by your rules that the sisters ask for books of devotion; do you think that generally they give you such as most delight you? No, I do assure you, this is not the intention of your rule, and the same may be said of your other exercises.

One sister finds herself, as she apprehends, much inclined to pray, to recite her office, or to be retired; and her superior desires her to go into the kitchen, or do such, or such a business; this goes against the grain of one given to devotion. I tell you that in such a case, you must rectify this desire, that God may live in you; and that it is impossible to obtain the union of your soul with God, by any other means but by mortification. To tell one you must die, is a hard saying; but those words are followed by the sweetest comfort imaginable, when you are assured that by this spiritual death, you will become united to God, which is our only true spiritual life.

You know, that according to our Saviour's words, "No man puts new wine into old vessels." The new wine of love, cannot enter where old Adam reigns: The proper inclinations we inherit from him, must first be destroyed. You will ask me how they must be destroyed? I answer, by a punctual obedience to your rules. I do assure you (and I speak it in God's name) that if you

do, faithfully perform what they teach you, you will most certainly arrive at the end you aim at, which is to be united to God. Observe my counsel; you will never gain perfection by sitting still with your arms across. You must labour in good earnest to overcome yourself, and to live up to reason, your rule, and obedience, and not according to your inclinations.

Walk then, my dear sister, in the direct tract of your rules, by observing them punctually, and you will arrive happily at an union with your God, which will conduct you safely to eternal felicity. But, let your observance of them be punctual, and faithful. If our Lord please to caress you with some interior gust, do not attach yourself to it. It is no more but such a comfiture as apothecaries use to recommend a bitter potion to a sick person. He must swallow the disgustful draught for his health, and tho' he receives those sugared grains, yet he must afterwards feel the disgustful bitterness of the medicine. By this you see clearly what kind of pretension you ought

to have, that you may become a worthy spouse of our Lord, and what disposition will render you capable to be wedded to him in the bridal place of love, mount Calvary.

Live then every step of your whole life, and frame all your actions, according to your rule, and God will reward you with a thousand blessings. All your happiness consists in perseverance. I do heartily exhort you to it, my dearest daughter, and I do earnestly beseech his infinite goodness, that he will heap upon you his heavenly grace, and affect you with his divine love in this world, which will make us all meet joyfully in his glory in the next. *Amen.*

## C H A P. XLVII.

*Certain Maxims, or Rules, how to live constantly in the Exercise of Virtue.*

THE first maxim is, that of St. Paul: "All things co-operate for the good of those who love God." Since God knows how to bring good out of ill, for whom should he do this, but for those who without reserve, give themselves up to him; nay, he

makes their very past sins contribute to their good, as we see in David, St. Peter, and the holy Magdalen. If God casts the filth of ignominious and shameful sins before our eyes; it is to make the honourable sight of virtue more beautiful. If God makes you fall flat on the earth, as he did St. Paul, it is to raise you up to a higher glory.

The second maxim is, that God is our father, otherwise he would not have commanded us to say "Our Father, who art in heaven;" and what can give us cause of fear, while we are children of such a Father without whose providence not the least hair of our head can be lost to us. It is an unaccountable folly, that, being children of such a Father, we can admit any other care but that of loving and serving him. Think you of me, said our Saviour to St. Catharine, and be well assured I'll think of you.

The third maxim is, that which our Saviour taught his apostles: "When I sent you without Scrip or Staff, did you want any thing?" they answered no. Reflect then, that when you suffered afflictions, even at such times when you had as yet no confidence



God did you perish in those afflictions? You know you did not. How then can you entertain any thought of despondency, or want courage to overcome your adversities? God has never forsaken you to this present hour, and why should he forsake you just now when you are resolved to be his, and to trust him in a better manner than formerly? Be not thus apprehensive of future mishaps. Perhaps they will never light to your share; and if they should, God will strengthen you to bear them. He commanded St. Peter to walk to him upon the water; St. Peter terrified with the blustering wind and gaping waves, was frightened, and feared he should be drowned, and calls to his divine master for help. If God ordains that you should walk upon the boisterous waves of adversity, doubt not, fear not, God is with you; take courage, he will stretch out his hand and deliver you.

The fourth maxim is grounded on the consideration of eternity. It imports me little what I am, or how I am for these few fleeting moments, so I enjoy eternally the glory of my

God. My soul, we are marching towards eternity every step we take; we have in a manner one foot on the brink of it already. Let it be a happy eternity, and what matters it whether our stay here for an instant, be vexatious or no. Is it possible we should know, that the suffering troubles for three or four days, should bring us an eternal consolation and infinite content for ever, and yet we should think much to endure such an uneasiness, and for so short a time? Whatever is not for eternity, is in reality nothing but fleeting vanity.

The fifth maxim, is that of the apostle, 'Far be it from me, that I should glory but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Plant deep in your heart, Jesus Christ crucified, and then all the crosses of this world, will seem to you roses. They who are pierced deep with the sense of a crown of thorns which Christ our head wore, will never feel any pain by the little scratches, or prickles of worldly afflictions.



F I N I S.